

Helgvor of the Blue River

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*The saber-toothed tiger, the mammoth, the gray cave bear were
Helgvor's enemies—but out of the mountain caves was
to come a more terrible, two-legged menace*

Helgvor's hatchet slashed out at the Tzoh raider



CHAPTER I.

THE DEVOURING MOUNTAIN.

THE women at the entrance to the caverns contemplated the flames leaping toward the stars, and the sky lowered over the plain like a hollow rock.

"Our fathers have seen torrents of fire flowing," Old Man Urm said. "The fire melted the stone, and the men died like locusts."

He was the age of whitened crows:

The Tzohs believed that he had been born with the stars, the river and the forest. The other old men stared at him with dull eyes. Because it was the time when the strong men of the tribe were away hunting for herbivorous, giant animals, the red flames seemed more frightening. The mountain growled within its flanks.

Urm spoke to the angry spirits which reside in the stone—one never knows when they may escape: "The Tzohs shall pour warm blood upon

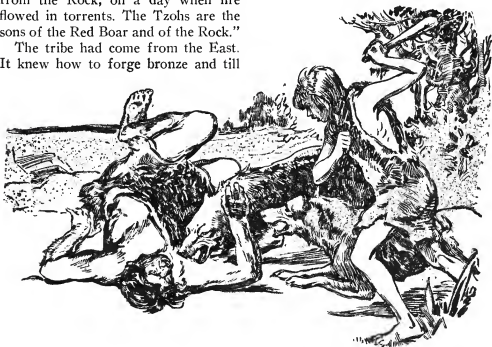
the mountain," he clamored. "Living hearts shall be torn from chests and shall feed the Hidden Lives."

He lifted supplicating hands, ashen and quivering like reeds. The flames paled. The moaning of the women was heard from cave to cave, and the voice of the mountain lowered.

"The Tzohs will sacrifice at sunrise!" the old man promised. And he added, in a murmur: "The Tzohs are sons of the Great Boar which issued from the Rock, on a day when fire flowed in torrents. The Tzohs are the sons of the Red Boar and of the Rock."

The tribe had come from the East. It knew how to forge bronze and till

This dictate, passing from the highest cave to the lowest, reassured the women. The mountain had understood. The far-away drone slackened, the flames of the crater became almost invisible. The women and the old people returned to the shadows of the rocks. Urm remained alone with Glava, daughter of Wokr, who belonged to warrior Wam the Lynx. For the children are the property of the mother's brother.



the soil, while the men of the West still chipped stone instruments. The caverns sheltered two hundred warriors, as many adult women, three hundred children, few old people, for the race practiced the Law, which is to kill off the weak, and lived without blemish.

"To-morrow," Urm went on softly, "three women and a warrior must perish! The Test of the Stones shall designate them."

Glava was but a year beyond childhood. She did not have the cubical head of the Tzohs nor their slanting brows: She resembled a grandmother of another breed, because of her light colored face, of the tawny gleams in her eyes, of the long hair which grew constantly, while the hair of the true Tzohs remained short and snarled at the tips.

In her, Urm recognized the race of the Green Lakes, from which Tzoh

warriors had stolen women, long ago. At that time, because of a prolonged period of starvation, the women had been decimated; for food must first be served to warriors. When they became too weak, a club felled them and their flesh fed the survivors.

Glava, thinking of the Test of the Stones, hated the Hidden Lives. Yet she was sure that she would not die, for, tall and lithe, with powerful muscles, stronger and more agile than any other woman in the three clans, she could lift the largest stones.

But Amhao, her sister, whom she preferred to the rest of the tribe, would be sacrificed. Terror and anger filled her breast. The chief, Kzahn, son of the Black Boar, was odious to her because of his roughness, his ferocity, and also because, when he returned from the great hunt, he would break off her canine teeth and make her his wife.

His head like that of an aurochs, his odor like that of a jackal, his frenzied eyes, disgusted her. And she did not want Amhao to perish; to save her, she would rebel against Kzahn, Urm and the Hidden Lives.

"The stars are cold!" Urm mumbled: "Why do you not go back into the cavern?"

Formerly, he had been the chief of the Men of the Rock: He was still heeded, because he alone knew all legends and all mysteries. Also, his strength surpassed that of aged men much younger than he; he scaled the crests; he could walk half a day: The belief was growing that he was immortal.

Glava did not like him. He constantly exacted human sacrifices and watched blood flow with grave joy.

"I shall go back into the cavern," she assented.

"Go! It is best that Urm be alone to hear the Great Word."

She left and sought for Amhao. Although she knew the fate awaiting her, the young woman was asleep, with her child near by. If he had been younger, she would have been safe, but he had passed his sixth season. Amhao's sleep was troubled and light. When Glava took her hand, she sat up in the shadows.

"Rise," Glava whispered, "and come with your little one."

Although she was the older and had cared for Glava as a child, Amhao now submitted to the stronger will of her sister. She rose. The night was stirred with wind. Bodies sprawled in their path. At the extremity of the cave, they slipped through a narrow, rough gap, reached the torrent, almost dry, which poured between granite walls.

"Where are we going?" Amhao asked.

"Where you shall not die," replied the daughter of Wokr.

A deep rumble was heard in the flanks of the mountain; the red light again leaped toward the stars.

"The Hidden Lives will avenge themselves upon us!" moaned Amhao, who vacillated like a twig in the wind; terror choked her. Glava bent her head before the obscure horror of the legend, but her instincts impelled her to rebel, to be incredulous, almost.

"If Amhao remains in the cave, it is to die!" she said. "What more can the Hidden Lives do to her?"

Her small, powerful hands grasped Amhao's arm. The red fire wrapped the crest, water flowed like blood, and the mountain roared like a gigantic lion. Then impetuous anger swept the daughter of Wokr. She defied the elements, the Hidden Lives and the Clans.

"The Hidden Lives are blind," she

said. "They strike like a falling stone."

And she led away Amhao, whose soul was as that of a child. The torrent became a river, and a distorted moon appeared beyond the Black River. Glava walked rapidly, without hesitation, having chosen her path. The growling of the mountain could no longer be heard, but the red glow added to the light of the moon.

Jackals, behind the women, yelped lugubriously, then a spotted beast emerged from a bush. Glava, recognizing a leopard, stopped to face it and uttered a strident yell. Stretched out like a reptile, eyes glowing in the darkness, it crept forward cautiously. Far away, between the tall, black poplar trees, the shimmering of the river could be discerned.

Warriors armed with a bow, with a club or a bronze knife, do not dread the leopard, and it never attacks them; but in the Tzoh country it could recognize women and children.

"I shall break your bones and pierce your chest!" Glava cried, imitating the hunters. She saw a round stone. Picking it up, she lifted her arm high. This gesture stopped the beast.

"Walk toward the river, Amhao!" ordered the daughter of Wokr, "and take your child."

Amhao obeyed, and was followed by Glava, who walked backward, and each time the leopard drew nearer the young girl stopped threateningly. But the animal grew excited; hunger stirred its entrails. Glava, aware that all animals are afraid of the human glance, kept her eyes on it. Light-footed and furtive, the jackals followed the hunt.

Suddenly the leopard changed tactics. In a few oblique bounds it circled the fugitives and crouched before

Amhao. Gripped by icy discouragement, she thought that the Hidden Lives were guiding the wild beast and remained motionless. It scented this fear and came forward.

But Glava forestalled it. The stone shot out and struck the animal on the nose. With a howl of pain and fury the leopard retreated toward the river. The jackals yelped shrilly in astonishment. Everywhere appeared their coppery pelts, their pointed ears; they were weak, cowardly, yet dangerous.

"The leopard will come back!" Amhao said.

Glava, who had picked up the stone, dispersed three jackals with a menacing gesture. But Amhao was not reassured; the leopard, as the pain dwindled, returned toward the two women. Again it was near, with its cortège of parasites.

"Glava will break off the leopard's teeth!" the young girl shouted.

Then the voice of thunder growled in the ground; the river became scarlet in hue. The mountain could be seen to vacillate, the whole plain palpitated like a chest. Glava and Amhao rolled on the grass; a cleft in the ground swallowed the leopard; the jackals moaned; flights of birds flapped above the trees. In the double light of the moon and of the red flames, the eye of Glava, keen as an eagle's, saw the rocks crack and engulf the caverns.

"The Hidden Lives!" Amhao sighed.

"They have killed the tribe," Glava retorted, "and you are alive!"

The leopard had not reappeared but the jackals already scented the exciting odor of blood and were yelping on the lips of the cleft. In the ravaged plain and on the bank of the river, the trees were tilted, animals were fleeing, and hills were sinking gently.

Glava at last found what she sought: A canoe abandoned by the Tzohs.

"There!" she said, "we shall leave for unknown lands."

The caves, except one, had become the graves of the women, of the old people and the children. But Urm had survived. Standing on a boulder, he recalled the time when fire had flowed like water, and mused: "When the warriors return they will go and take the women from the men of the Blue River and of the Green Lakes. The blood of the prisoners we take shall appease the Hidden Lives."

Because he had escaped death once more, he thought that his life would never end and scorned those who died.

CHAPTER II.

THE INVASION.

HELGVOR, son of Shtra, walked up the bank of the river with two dogs, a wolf and a child. The skin of a bear covered the man's shoulders, the skin of a jackal those of the boy.

From Shtra and his ancestors, Helgvor had inherited height, tawny eyes and light hair. His agility was comparable to that of a deer. His strength was nearly that of Heigoun, the most powerful of the men gathered in the Red Peninsula.

For twenty generations, the clan had bred and trained dogs. Helgvor, on a day of hunting, had picked up a wolf cub; the animal with the oblique glance lived with the dogs whose glances were straight. Like them, obedient and faithful, it served man and helped him seek his prey.

It was autumn; the warriors of the Blue River were off in search of ad-

ventures; the clan was guarded by five warriors and twenty dogs; many old men still knew how to throw a spear. There were more than sixty women, young and middle-aged. Each day two warriors went scouting afar with their dogs, for remote danger is the more to be feared when men are concerned.

Helgvor explored the South. The Men of the Rocks, with cubical heads, lived two moons' march away. He had never seen them, but Gmar and Shtra related that formerly they had raided in the region of the Blue River and the Green Lakes. Their hatchets and knives, more to be dreaded than stone hatchets and oaken clubs, were made with fire.

Helgvor, followed by the dogs, the wolf and the boy, climbed a boulder on the river bank. From there he glanced about. Each thing was as new as his youth; the world started afresh each morning; the grass, the tree, the flower, the weed; water and clouds were eternal. There would be horses and aurochs grazing on the plain always; hippopotami among the reeds; rhinoceroses in great numbers, and surly boars; deer with bleating voices; megaceros elks with gigantic antlers; and even mammoths with hides like the bark of old sycamore trees.

Never would the does depart from the brush, the crows cease to gather in black troops; the doves, the storks, the ducks, the cranes and the swallows would fly across the vast sky forever. A world in which there would not exist vultures, eagles, cave lions, tawny leopards, black leopards, herons propped on their stilts, numberless insects and water animals, could not be conceived by Helgvor.

His vigilant eyes followed everywhere those strange shapes moving among the motionless plants, armed

with teeth, with talons, with hoofs, with horns, with venom, arms attached to their bodies, while he, Helgvor, carried spears, club, stone hatchet, bow and arrows which he could place aside on the rock.

Near him, their senses alert to all variations in the atmosphere, were the two dogs and the wolf, weapons themselves for the man, living weapons which increased his hold upon the world, weapons unknown to the Tzohs.

The boy, agile and tireless, small creature with a brave heart, hid in the grass, in the narrow crevices, behind swells of the ground, even in branches too weak to bear Helgvor's weight. He was already acquainted with human ruses.

The dogs growled, the wolf rose, bristling.

Mammoths were passing by. Their enormous bodies, the color of clay, seemed moving boulders. With their snaky trunks, their curving tusks, they appeared to come from the depths of the ages. All in them was strange. Alone among living beings, they bore that nose which was a colossal arm, those teeth, each of which weighed as much as a hundred clubs.

During their thousands of years of peaceful reign, their race had witnessed the vanishing of the giant felines and of the great cave bears. They themselves were the last of their breed. Already, their kind had vanished from the land of the Men of the Rock; they rarely reached the Green Lakes. But the Blue River still watered a sufficient number of their herds for Helgvor to deem them eternal.

He loved them. They satisfied his essential craving for power. And standing upon the boulder, he shouted: "The mammoth is mightier than the lion, the tiger and the rhinoceros!"

The wolf listened and sniffed; the dogs stopped growling. All three admitted they were unable to cope with those boulders of flesh. Helgvor watched them drinking with a dull exaltation. He dreamed that they might have been trained like dogs, for in him the instinct to transform the free beast into a tame animal was more developed than in any other man of the Blue River. Guarded by the mammoths, the tribe would be invincible, and the Men of the Rock would never dare approach the Red Peninsula.

A LONG quiver rippled the flesh of the nomad. Far off, thin and ominous, a bluish streamer of smoke rose behind a hillock, spreading wide at the crest. On this calm morning, on the humid plain, that smoke had a single, formidable meaning: The presence of men.

Worry dropped on Helgvor like the blow of a club. Then he clung to a slim hope, that perhaps the hunters had returned. But was that possible? The warriors had been away ten days, and a great hunt usually lasted half a moon. Doubtless they had encountered large herds of horses. For a long time, in the vicinity of the Red Peninsula, horses had been found only in small numbers. For the winter, captured horses were guarded by the dogs.

These were fed with grass picked by the women at the end of summer. When the hunting was poor, they were killed to feed the clans. Helgvor had desired to tame them, but because of obscure traditions the old men had opposed him. The horses soon became accustomed to captivity, lived behind barriers erected by men, near the huts.

"Hiolg, hide yourself!" the warrior addressed his small companion, while he himself sprawled close to the

ground. The boy concealed himself behind a rock. Helgvor watched the menacing smoke. He waited a long time. At first, the smoke grew thicker, then lighter. And on both sides of the hillock, bushes spread, which kept all presence secret.

Helgvor, after scanning the soil, knew that even Hiolg could not approach them without being seen. The plain spread everywhere. Only the river bank afforded shelter, but upstream and downstream the river flowed far from the hillock.

"Have the men seen Helgvor?" he wondered.

Perhaps they were watching from behind the bushes as he watched them from the top of his boulder. Then they would not show themselves.

Suddenly he uttered an exclamation; an erect being had left the bushes to the left, and the keen eye of Helgvor saw at once that the cubical head, the squat body, were not those of a son of the Blue River. He breathed hard, for he felt that the clan and himself were running a fearful risk.

"Hiolg sees the man?" he asked.

"Hiolg sees him," the boy with the hawk's eyes answered.

Helgvor pulled up the bear skin over his skull, and Hiolg did the same with the jackal pelt wrapped about his shoulders.

"Helgvor and Hiolg must reach the river!" the man said.

They slid from the boulder, opposite the hillock. Then they slipped through the grass, crawled. The dogs and the wolf followed silently.

THEY marched a third of a day, making sure that no one followed their tracks. The Red Peninsula was near. Helgvor planned means to defend it. With the three

warriors, the women and the dogs, it would be possible to beat back a few enemies, and doubtless the invaders would not attack unless they felt themselves much the stronger.

The small hillock, the appearance of a single warrior, all indicated a small hunting party. And the entrance to the Peninsula, twenty paces wide, was defended by bowlders: Helgvor believed that it would take more than a score of men to pass.

Hiolg interrupted his thoughts. He came up, panting: "Men are walking toward the river."

Helgvor again ascended the bank. At a distance, a troop of men, spread out, advanced prudently. All had massive heads and squat bodies. The warrior thought he recognized the man he had seen near the hillock. He counted seven silhouettes. If a surprise was to be avoided, there must be haste; but the child, although agile, delayed progress.

"Helgvor will run!" the warrior said. "Hiolg knows how to make himself invisible as a mole. He shall follow."

The child was not afraid. If needed, he would enter the river, for he swam and dove like an otter. And on the opposite shore there were many hiding places among the rocks and in the forest.

"Hiolg will not be seen!" he answered briefly.

Helgvor ran. His speed was that of the roebuck. And he neared the spot where the Peninsula opened, at right angles with the shore. First, he heard a confused murmur, then shouts, fierce yells, long moans, cries of terror.

Helgvor stopped. The shiver of disaster shook him. The Red Peninsula was invaded. The Tzohs were cleaving skulls, piercing bellies, crushing

limbs. The old men, the women and a surviving warrior were in flight before a howling horde. At every step a club fell, a spear sank into a chest, and once the victim was down, a Tzoh pounced upon the body, to smash the head or tear at the heart.

Weak from his wounds, the last warrior faced his foes. It was to die. Chest drenched with blood, eyes blinded and legs quivering, he muttered insults and predicted the vengeance of the Ougmars. He lifted his hatchet with an effort, struck out at random. Ten clubs fell; the warrior tumbled to the grass, where the spears dug into his palpitating flesh.

Then, gripped by holy fury, trembling with the courage of his breed, Helgvor cried: "The Ougmars will crush the Tzohs!"

Startled, the invaders turned. And they saw nothing. Helgvor, understanding the uselessness of a struggle and the need to survive, had concealed himself in the thick bushes covering the Peninsula. Several Tzohs explored the space in vain; Helgvor, the wolf and the dogs remained invisible.

HELGVOR already seemed out of reach. He was advancing under cover when the wolf bristled and the dogs growled. Two Tzoh warriors appeared from behind a boulder, which, at the same time as the breeze, had attenuated their scent. It was a stark scene, shaded by tall rocks and thick with bushes. Helgvor and his enemies watched each other, motionless. It was a merciless minute: Life for the victor, death for the vanquished.

The Man of the Blue River gave the signal to the wolf and the dogs. Those cunning beasts slid through the vegetation and reappeared behind the Tzohs. Helgvor shot two arrows one

after the other. The first creased the skull of a Tzoh, the second knocked out one eye, and as he uttered a howl of pain the wolf attacked him from the rear.

Hatchet brandished, Helgvor leaped forward.

The second Tzoh met his onslaught, while the first fought the wolf and the dogs. A spear gashed Helgvor's shoulder, then the two were face to face. The Tzoh was squat, with mighty shoulders and muscular hands. He cried: "The Tzohs have taken your women and killed your children! They shall massacre your warriors and there will be no more Ougmars on the earth."

Helgvor did not understand the words, but knew them to be insulting. He retorted: "The Ougmars will wipe out the filthy race of the Tzohs!"

His hatchet whirled; the other lifted his club. Because they were both agile and keen of eye, handled their weapons well, neither was struck at first. Leaping like leopards, they struck and dodged at the same time.

Helgvor, fearing the arrival of other enemies, resolved to end it quickly. He lowered his weapon, allowed the club to fall. The heavy mace almost hit him, but he avoided its sweep with a light leap, and split the skull of his opponent, who had been carried forward by his lunge. The beaten man dropped in a heap, and lay dying upon the grass.

Aside, the victorious wolf and dogs were devouring the other warrior. Hiolg, who had contributed to the victory by clutching the Tzoh warrior's legs, threw himself toward Helgvor, who shouted: "Thus will perish all the Tzohs, race of jackals and stinking hyenas."

But the Tzohs, who had not seen the combat, did not learn the fate of the

two warriors until later. As they could not find Helgvor, they finished their task. They drove aside the adult women, methodically massacred the old people and the children. At times, when an old man or a woman knelt at their feet, the warriors would laugh and torture them longer. At last the killing ended. The chief, kneeling, with hands extended, called out:

"Hidden Lives, the Tzohs have spilled blood for your drinking. You will lead back to the land of the Rocks the warriors and the captive women."

For a while longer, the Tzohs explored the Red Peninsula. When they discovered a trembling old fellow or a frightened child, the clubs or the spears were used, and ended matters.

CHAPTER III.

THE PURSUIT BEGINS.

THE sun blazed like a red furnace when Helgvor reached the Peninsula. The dogs and the wolf smelled the corpses; black birds swooped with hoarse cries; jackals were coming at their slinking gait, drawn by the odor of blood.

The Ougmars did not bury the dead, as did the Tzohs, and they had no definite rites. They knew, nevertheless, that the Ougmars were the children of the Giant Eagle and of the Blue River. The Giant Eagle came from an egg floating on the river. At that time, the water flowed over the forest and the rocks; the Eagle was larger than the tiger—and the Ougmars respected the life of the Eagle.

The old men knew, also, that when starting for the hunt, a spear should be thrown toward the clouds, accompanied by words passed down from their ancestors, to propitiate luck.

"The Sons of the Eagle and of the River will slay the Tzohs!" Helgvor growled.

He did not chase away the crows, the hyenas and the jackals, for it was their task to purify the forest and the plain of dead bodies. From time to time he glanced at the corpses sprawled on the ground. The blood of his own people had not been spilled, for his mother had died ten years before; he had no sisters, and his father and brothers were away with the warriors.

But Hiolg had returned quickly enough to witness the kidnaping of his mother and the slaying of a grandfather. Adult hatred swelled his puny breast.

For a while it appeared that the Tzohs had massacred all save those they had taken captive. Then an old man appeared, his chest bloody, followed by a grown woman who had sheltered herself in the thicket. Then came a few children, and as the moments passed, a few others, women or old men.

The warrior addressed them.

"Helgvor will follow the trail of the Tzohs. He will leave behind coals and smoke-blackened stones, sometimes he will stick twigs into the earth. Thus, when the warriors return here, they shall be able to follow him."

The old men had lost much blood; they listened as in a daze. But a woman understood and answered: "Malgwa will repeat Helgvor's words to the warriors."

Twilight spread upon the clouds a world of illusion, brighter, vaster than the real world. A depressing vapor steamed up from the river; the crows, the vultures, the jackals and hyenas enjoyed this hour.

Helgvor called the dogs and the wolf away from the human flesh. As he left

the Peninsula, Hioig came running after him. The boy had discovered the bodies of his little brothers among the dead, and moaned like a wolf cub.

The son of Shtra said to him: "Hioig is not swift enough. If the Tzohs find him, they will catch and kill him. Hioig shall remain here to await the warriors."

Having spoken thus, Helgvor threw a spear toward the sky, uttered the Words, and vanished, followed by the wolf and the dogs. Other dogs had reappeared, having escaped the general slaughter, and were joining the jackals and hyenas on the field of combat.

HELGVOR had no trouble following the trail of the kidnapers, for the wolf and the dogs had understood what he expected of them, and their sensitive nostrils could discern a scent far better than the keenest human eye could discern a silhouette.

Because the Tzohs were slowed down by their captives, the Ougmar warrior felt no great haste. He could count on the dogs not to lose the trail, and his own agility to catch up with his foes, and escape from them if they turned to pursue him.

The last ashen streak in the sky melted into the sunset, and nothing remained save the intense darkness of the night and the trembling glow of the stars.

Lights bloomed on the plain, indicating camp fires, the formidable, ominous signs of the erect beast, man. Helgvor had taken his station down wind, and lay in a hollow of the soil. He counted five fires, saw the black silhouettes of warriors and women, at times their bodies glowing red in the flames' glare. Rage made his jaws lock savagely when he identified the young-

est of the women. He was swept at once with anger at the outrage, and a glowing, primitive tenderness.

"The Tzohs are jackals," he muttered in a low, thick voice. "The Men of the River will break their bones and recapture their women!"

He tried to count his enemies. There were about twice as many as the Ougmars could gather. Despairing, dazed, the women seemed resigned, the majority already appeared on good terms with the victors. Helgvor felt an immense jealousy, a collective jealousy, but was not otherwise surprised. Women tremble like does, and do not wish to die!

He spied upon the camp a long time, growing used to the gestures, to the smells of the Tzohs. His attention was drawn to the leader, and all his hatred condensed upon that compact stature, on that enormous face, red as fresh blood. In the darkness, Helgvor lifted his club, aimed his spear; the madness of combat contracted his fists, dilated his heart.

At length he decided to rest. He found a safe haven in a depression of the plain, lit a small fire and roasted a piece of deer, which he shared with the animals. Then he slept, but his ears and his nose continued to perceive the subtle emanations, the rumors of the night. About him, the wolf and the dogs watched also, seeming part of his being.

He could not be surprised.

TEN days passed, and Helgvor still trailed the Tzohs.

Because of his skill, his scent, his prudence, perhaps also because his foes had no dogs, nothing had betrayed his presence. At night he kept even further away than during the day.

The march of the Tzohs was made

very slow by the women, and by the need to carry the canoes, almost useless to them as they were progressing upstream. On occasions, when the river widened to form a sort of lake, the canoes were launched, and Helgvor feared he would be left behind. But soon the stream became narrow and rapid again, and the Tzohs resumed the march upon the plain.

On the morning of the eleventh day the Men of the Rocks divided into two smaller bands. While the bulk of the party went on, the others scattered as if to surround a herd of animals. Helgvor recognized their chief, the man seen near the hillock on the morning of the massacre.

Dogs and wolf, eyes glowing, panting and bristling, remained silent. They had followed the trail of the Tzohs so many days, without being sent in to attack, and knew them as enemies to be feared.

Undetected, Helgvor drew back, and as he no longer feared to lose the trail, retreated a considerable distance. He reached a line of rocks which formed a crenelated wall along the bank, and concealed himself. His line of retreat was secure; through the high grass, he could reach a clump of sycamore trees.

The halt lasted a long time. The river flowed by, very wide, and islands could be distinguished upstream. Between two of them emerged a canoe. Helgvor was startled to see that it was handled by women.

Nearer to the right bank than to the left, they paddled desperately. Soon, another canoe appeared, filled with warriors, gaining on the first one rapidly, obviously seeking to slide between the fugitives and the bank. The women swerved to the right at the precise moment that a third canoe appeared around the tip of an island.

Then Helgvor's flesh quivered with the hunting passion. And while he crawled, panting, a shadow appeared among the rocks. The warrior turned his head and recognized the boy, Hiolg.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FUGITIVES.

GLAVA and Amhao had gone downstream constantly. Amhao, skilled in the finding of plants and fruits which feed human beings, lit and kept alive the fire with more ability than her sister.

Glava showed a surer skill of the hunt, a sharper knowledge of animals. During her childhood she had learned to throw the sharpened stones and the spear; her hand was deft, her glance quick and sure. Each day she brought back meat for the night's fire.

As they spent almost the entire day in the canoe, they thus avoided lions, leopards and bears. At night, they sought a tall boulder or a cave, and their fire kept away the flesh-eaters. Often, also, they camped on an island in the river.

When there chanced to be game on the island, they remained two or three days, although they still had to beware of the large hydrosaurians. They had manufactured spears, two clubs, two darts, which although not as solid as those made by the warriors, were efficient nevertheless. Glava had roughed them out, and Amhao, more patient, had polished them with tireless persistence. And thus, day by day, they had become better adapted to combat. The energy and audacity of Glava bolstered the spirits of her elder, who practiced the throwing of stones and spears with docility.

Now, they scarcely feared the pan-

ther, the leopard or the hyena, but when they heard the thunderous roar, the menacing yelp of the tiger, or the growling of the gray bear, lords of the plain and the forest, they were aware of their weakness. At the time when the caves were their refuge, the strength of the warriors had protected them: the whole tribe could scorn the flesh-eaters.

Memories of the cave dwellings were strongest when the shadows flooded the world, when dimly distinguished shapes prowled around their fire, even when the stars seemed threatening. Then Amhao sighed, thinking of Tsaouhm, her master, the father of her child.

"Tsaouhm is strong!" she chanted.

At the sound of this complaint, which seeped into her self-confidence in a subtle manner, audacity and anger would stir in Glava's chest.

"Amhao forgets she was to die!" she would grumble. "Long since her blood would have dried upon the rocks! The Tzohs are worse than the tiger or the lion!"

ONE night a hungry gray bear stopped by the bank of the river. Since the preceding day, wary beasts had caught his heavy scent and had avoided him. In vain he had hidden among the bowlders, squatted in the brush, lurked in the high grasses: the *saiga* antelope, the *claph* deer, the doe, the wild sheep, discerned his effluvia above that of the leaves, of the grass, of the smelly sod.

His fury grew, stirred by hunger, and his opaque, dull soul was filled with indignation against the ruses or the agility of his prey.

Before the flames of the women's fire he opened wide his growling jaws, and when he shook his paws enormous

claws clattered. The eyes, ferocious and alert, gleamed covetously at the two human beings. He was swathed in his pelt, which hung in thick pleats on his chest; each of his movements revealed a supple strength; the habit of winning gave him an undefinable, formidable prestige.

At times he would prowl nervously before the flames, then stop short, oscillating, gaping, furious. A concave bowlder sheltered the women; the fire seemed to form the string of a stone bow. The wild beast could have cleared it at a single leap, but the mysterious palpitation of the flames filled him with distrust. When he crept nearer he was dazzled, and the heat hurt his nostrils.

Glava, having closed the gaps with care, kept the fire high with branches. Each time the monster closed in she would wave a blazing torch. Then, astonished, he would growl deeply and show his teeth. New stars appeared, others waned. The stubborn brute was still near, and the woman saw the heap of twigs and branches dwindle. Although they had gathered much wood at twilight and fed the fire stingily, it was probable the flames would die out before the red star fell beneath the horizon.

Then, their flesh would bleed between the jaws of the bear.

At intervals Glava brandished her spear, but she knew that the weapon could not penetrate to the heart of the huge animal and that a wound would but stir him to savage fury, to blind rage. She did not launch the weapon.

Then there was no more wood; the last flames fluttered, the crimson coals darkened, and the teeth of Amhao clashed together with fear. Glava made ready for her last combat.

Colossal mass in the shadow, the bear came forward. For a few mo-

ments, to the right and behind the rocks, yelps and cries had been heard. The murmur swelled into a roar. A very tall animal appeared, trotting with a perceptible limp, and the bear, through wide-open nostrils, identified a horse. Wounds in the legs were slowing the fugitive, and he had not covered a hundred strides when five wolves appeared, then a horde of jackals.

With a joyous grunt the bear started forward. In the grip of immense terror, the horse halted, turned his head. He saw the five wolves across the path to the east, while the bear and the rocks barred the path to the west.

The horse spun on his hoofs and fled southward, pursued by the bear with oscillating, heavy leaps; by the wolves, now frightened by their new rival but kept in action by lingering hope. The hunted beast, reddening the trail with his blood, constantly lost ground. His wounded leg seemed dead, stiff, and hampered his strides. And all about, avid lives sought to swallow this terrified life.

Soon, with the bear so near that the wolves howled with disappointment, the grass-eater saw nothing but greedy maws. A few seconds before there had remained a lane of escape, the open plain upon which, for so long, through his scent and speed, he had fled from the meat-eaters. Now, space was filled with famished beasts, and the horse, heavy as a rock, still as a tree, waited for death with a sinister moan. The bear split his throat, blood drenched the red hair; a wolf, bolder than the others, attacked him from behind.

THAT terrible night made the women even more prudent. When the haven was not sure, they upset their canoe, and this shelter disconcerted the crude intelligence of

the wild beasts. Between the ground and the rim of the craft there was space left through which to prick the nostrils that came scenting, or the groping paws. Mysteriously wounded by an invisible foe, the beasts beat a rapid retreat. Glava and Amhao took care not to wield their spears too violently, so as not to exasperate the larger meat-eaters.

Almost always the prowlers were only wolves, hyenas and jackals. Once a tiger came, and twice a lion. They did not linger, perhaps because they were puzzled, perhaps because they found easier game. Often, also, the fugitives avoided animals by taking shelter in the thickets. As they went further and further from the tribe they halted for longer periods. They made pointed stakes, as they had seen the Tzohs do, and used them to make a bristling barrier around their shelter.

On the river islands security was almost complete. Sometimes they would slide into crevices too narrow for the large meat-eaters, and when they chanced to discover an empty cave, easily defended, they would sojourn there for several days.

A moon after their flight from the clan, the women decided that they had come far enough to settle for a long period. They needed a section filled with game; a haven safe from beasts and storms; the proximity of the river. This they sought for many days. One morning, in a granite boulder, they saw a cleft wide enough to allow passage for a man, a large wolf or a leopard. This opening was four arms' lengths from the soil; the surface of the stone was smooth, slippery. It could not be reached by many animals lacking wings; even a panther would find the leap difficult to achieve.

Glava climbed on her sister's shoul-

ders. Before sliding into the cleft, she looked in, sniffed, smelled nothing save the large bats. Then, crouching, she advanced. A dim light dropped from the vault, the cleft widened to form a cave in which several human beings could find shelter. The light penetrated through a vertical split that cleaved the rock from bottom to top.

Glava, supplied with a handful of dried twigs, lit a fire which rapidly flamed high. She then noted that the top was five or six arms' lengths above her head; the refuge was good. The Daughter of the Rocks turned to her companion.

"Amhao and Glava shall rest here!" she said. "The entrance to the cave is too high for wolves—too narrow for the tiger, the lion or the gray bear. Stakes and stones shall defend it against the panther."

FOR the space of a half moon their life was as secure as if they had been living under the protection of the warriors, for they went forth only by day after inspecting the surroundings. The great felines were asleep. They found no tracks of the gray bear, no tracks of men.

There were beasts and plants in plenty. By lighting the fire beneath the opening of the roof, no smoke befouled the cave. The ruses and skill of the women grew day by day. Glava in particular could sense danger in advance, gifted as she was with the slyness of the jackal. When she pressed her ear against the ground, she heard the slightest sound; her glance pierced very far to espy beings which she identified by their gait, their movements.

Each day she made her traps more perfect, while Amhao shaped better and better weapons and tools. Provided with sharp spears, with a knotty

club, with a harpoon, Glava lived with quiet audacity and her courage made Amhao feel secure.

Nevertheless, Amhao regretted Tsaoulm, her man, who had been rough but not ferocious. He had shown her unexpected tenderness at times.

She remembered scenes that added to her homesickness. Although the women fed badly on what the warriors left, Amhao thought with uneasy longing of the immense fires on which roasted antelopes, deer or wild oxen, sheep, bustards and teals; of the endless gossip of the women; even of the hard work which followed the great hunting trips.

Glava thought less of her former existence, for the future rose before her. The instinct of the race, still undetermined, she brought to the new soil, and the thrill of new discoveries extinguished memory of the Rocks. Yet, on certain days, she felt a retrospective gentleness, saw in her mind's eyes the native caves. But it was brief; hatred against Old Urm, the horror of human sacrifices, the thought of having her canine teeth broken as a symbol of her union to Kzahn, who smelled like a jackal, filled her breast with anger.

ONE morning Glava was inspecting the canoe, concealed in the bushes one hundred arms' lengths from the river. With the help of Amhao she had repaired the cracks of the hull, had hewn new paddles. They used the craft to visit other islands or to reach the shores.

It was a long boat and split the stream easily. Glava granted it an undefined, unexplainable affection. Perhaps because the canoe bore the fugitives, skimmed over the river lightly; because it saved them much fatigue and many dangers; perhaps also be-

cause it had been often their sole refuge, she attributed life, understanding to it. So, almost every day, she came to see if the canoe was intact.

Before leaving the bushes, Glava paused, wishing to make sure that no prowler was near. She inhaled the scents, explored the surroundings with her keen glance, then pressed her ear against an ash tree.

Steps were quivering in the tree; at once she knew they were not those of four-footed animals or of birds.

The heavy rhythm indicated a vertical being loaded with a burden, and Glava, thinking at first that it was Amhao and her child, was reassured. Then worry grew. Why was Amhao so near the river? Had she not agreed to await Glava's return from the hunt?

The woman slipped silently out of the bushes. The wood ended on her left, where the steps had been heard and Amhao was in sight. She walked a short distance from the fringe of the thicket, so as to survey the plain without being seen. She did not notice her sister until she was very near.

"Why did Amhao leave the cave?"

"Amhao sought Glava." The older woman was ashen, her lips were bloodless. "Amhao has seen Tzohs!"

"Tzohs!" Glava repeated, frightened.

Amhao lifted the five fingers of her right hand and one finger of her left.

"Amhao recognized them?"

"There were Kamr, Son of the Hyena, Ouaro, Tohr—"

"Did they see Amhao?"

"They were far, walking toward the rock. The marsh halted them and they disappeared into the woods. Then I came down, circled the rock and came through the bushes."

"Amhao hid the fire?"

"Yes."

Glava shook her head, scanned the scene again.

"We must reach the island and hide."

She turned back to the canoe, followed by Amhao. They bore the craft to the bank. The grass was high, the shore deserted and the rock invisible. The two women could be seen only by men following the beach or standing across the stream from them. When they were in the canoe they drew some distance away from land. The current bore away the boat, slowly, then more rapidly.

Glava wondered if the Tzohs had stopped at the rock. Even then they were unlikely to suspect that the cleft admitted people into an inhabited cave, and, as it was morning, they were in no need of seeking shelter therein.

Seeking to guess the motive of their presence, she rejected the thought that they were pursuing them or that a hunting trip had taken them such a long distance from home. It could not be a migration of the whole tribe, either, for the Tzohs sought to live only on rocky soil.

Recollections leaped into her mind like locusts through grass: Glava and Amhao were the daughters of an alien woman. Finding the caves fallen in, the majority of their women killed, the Tzohs had gone to seek new mates near the Green Lakes or the Blue River.

CHAPTER V.

FLIGHT.

THE canoe slid on the smooth surface of the stream, which was so wide that the far shore could not be discerned. Then the island appeared, narrow and long, thickly covered with vegetation. Centuries had reared there

the trunks of the black poplar trees and sycamores. The willows were everywhere on the shore.

Before heading for the island Glava glanced long upon the plain. As no vertical shape appeared they plied the paddles and crossed the stream to a small cove sheltered by a barren jutting headland. They alighted quickly, hid in the bushes to wait.

Nothing revealed the presence of man. The hideous snout of a hippopotamus, the scales of a crocodile, the shell of a tortoise, the flight of a heron across the sky, then the appearance upon the beach of an *elaph* deer, of a rhinoceros, of an antelope, drew the women's attention momentarily.

Suddenly Glava started. Erect beings had appeared! Dim at first, they became more precise, and the fugitives recognized the men of their clan, among them Kzahn's well known bull-like head.

"Women!" Amhao exclaimed.

The women followed the first detachment of warriors. Of an alien breed, their faces lighter than those of the Tzohs, their hair in some cases the hue of leaves in the autumn, they resembled Glava.

"They come from the Green Lakes or the Blue River!" said the daughter of Wokr, "and are to replace those whom the Mountain has killed."

Obscure jealousy palpitated in Amhao's flesh while, because they looked like her, Glava felt pity for the captives, especially for those who belonged to the chief who smelled like a jackal. Amhao's face grew pale again, for she saw with the rear guard the warriors who had frightened her: Ouaro, Tohr and the others. They closed in on the main body.

The chief called a halt, questioned them. At intervals they scanned the

river and their glances lingered on the island. At length Kzahn, Son of the Black Boar, gave orders, and those who bore the canoes went to the shore and launched them. Two craft came toward the island.

"The Tzohs are on our trail!" Amhao moaned.

"No! They want to explore the island—perhaps camp."

"We must flee!"

The servile soul of the woman quivered within Amhao as she recalled compulsively the Law of the Rock and the vengeance of the Hidden Lives.

Glava hesitated. The island was vast, there were numerous hiding places, but the scent of the Tzohs was to be feared. The slightest indication would betray the fugitives. In particular, the canoe moored in the cove would at once reveal not only the presence of human beings but the identity of the two who had defied the might of the Hidden Lives.

"Amhao and Glava will flee!" she said.

The cove, behind the headland, was invisible to the new arrivals. Followed by her elder Glava crept to the canoe, cast off quickly and slid alongside the shore of the island, under the tall white willows. Had the Tzohs landed on the southern end they would have seen the fugitives. But they reached the central part where the island was considerably wider and where vision was screened by thick vegetation.

WHEN the two women reached the northern end the river spread before them, immense, swarming with voracious lives; it was the place where the canoe would be in sight, and the women stopped paddling, thinking of the ruthless tribe, of the mysterious tortures, of the flames

into which their quivering bodies would be thrown.

Glava slipped the canoe close to shore, within the veil of overhanging plants in which swarmed cold-blooded beasts: crocodiles, tortoises, snakes, gigantic spiders, enormous insects; a pink young hippopotamus dove, frightened; a crocodile lifted his long, scaly snout; a toad hopped away heavily while tiny birds with azure and coral wings fluttered in the leafage.

She listened, peered between the lianas at the canoes sliding toward the island, heard the voices of the men already ashore. But no Tzoh rear-guard appeared on the plain. She decided that by striking off toward the far shore they would remain undiscovered some time longer.

"Amhao and Glava will continue to flee!" she addressed her companion.

They started out again on the vast river, toward the left bank, where the stream turned a bend, ten thousand arms' lengths away. Should they succeed in reaching that turn and remain unseen, they would be saved.

Digging the paddles deep at each stroke, they strove desperately, and when they turned they saw no one on the dangerous zone of the island they had left. The turn! Already the canoe skirted the left shore, and they were under the overhanging bushes.

Kamr, son of the Hyena, had reached the opposite shore of the island. As he scanned the surface of the water his keen eyes espied the monstrous head of a hippopotamus emerging among floating branches, and, far off, something elongated skirting the left bank. Soon, he made out a canoe and two human beings aboard, and he gave the alarm, although he did not suspect them to be women.

Several of his companions ran up to his side, among them Kzahn, the Black Boar, and they all saw the craft vanish at the turn of the stream. Because it was always preferable to investigate, Kzahn ordered a pursuit, forbidding, however, that it be kept up longer than a fourth of one day, ordering his men to retreat in case the strange canoe was joined by others.

Twelve strong and agile warriors, known to be excellent paddlers, leaped into two canoes. Kzahn counted that they would gain rapidly on the mysterious boat ahead, and suggested that its occupants should be brought back alive, if possible. After the craft had left, the chief became worried. Were the strangers warriors from the Green Lakes or the Blue River, or merely stragglers? A dim dread arose in his thick brain, but he put it aside with scorn. Did he not command one hundred fighting men, while the Blue River clan could not muster over sixty?

As for those of the Green Lakes, they were known to be hunting far away, in scattered groups. To have them mass their forces, they would need open warfare. And no war, for two generations, had clashed the Men of the Rocks with those of the Green Lakes. Nevertheless, because a leader must at one and the same time be very brave and very wise, the Black Boar sent out scouts on both shores of the stream.

GLAVA uttered a muffled cry; Amhao groaned. Hope shrunk, their distress increased like the shadows of the black poplar-trees, for a canoe had rounded the bend.

Then the women knew themselves to be as weak, as helpless, as the mosquitoes humming near the shore. And Amhao, discouraged, relaxed her grip

on the paddle. Her spirit yielded to despair. She was ready to surrender to evil destiny, ready to acknowledge the might of the Tzohs and the power of the Hidden Lives.

"We cannot escape them," she moaned. "Amhao must die."

For a brief instant, bitter grief lowered Glava's head, but energy re-awakened in her with the need to exhaust the resources of her being before surrendering to men and fate.

"Amhao and Glava will die if taken;" she said bitterly, "they are not yet caught."

"Behold!" cried Amhao.

The second canoe had come in sight.

"Did we not escape Urm, the leopard and the bear?" Glava spoke roughly. And she looked at Amhao with tender resolution, and the older woman, dominated by a stronger will, picked up the paddle.

It became a hard and miserable struggle; the canoes of the pursuers, better constructed, shot forward by the might of muscular arms, devoured space. Glava saw her chances dwindle at each sweep of the flashing paddles. Before very long the Tzohs saw the fugitives clearly and lifted a clamor, a raucous, furious, insulting, vindictive clamor.

"The Tzohs have recognized us!" Amhao said.

One of their canoes shot directly toward the women's craft; the other kept close to the left bank, as close as the vegetation permitted, to cut off possible retreat. That one was the swifter of the two, and her diagonal course would bring it in position to intercept the fleeing craft.

Glava headed for the right bank. But Amhao, already very tired, was almost fainting, no longer hoped. The tests and the perils had been useless,

they would be taken back to their starting point, and their torture would be horrible.

Tzohs knew of suicide. Glava addressed her companion.

"Amhao and Glava can make the bank, and there, if Amhao wills it, they shall die." Amhao looked long toward the bank, then her sorrowing eyes rested on her child. Glava went on: "If we jump into the river, the Tzohs will rescue us. We have firm hands, we can stab ourselves with the spears."

This was reasonable. Moreover, a mighty instinct urged her to persist until the last chance was gone. The bank rose steeply, rocky and crested with tawny bushes. As she was about to land, Glava lowered her head and the tears flowed. Love of life sprang up in that young body; immense memories spread, of events lost in the night of her consciousness: the beauty of the dawn upon the plain, the marvel of the growing grass, the miracle of life. Even that morning, Glava and Amhao had been free to breathe, had been drunk with space and movement.

The craft struck land.

Three hundred arms' lengths behind appeared the leading Tzoh canoe, and the other came on obliquely. Amhao, uttering a weak moan, clasped her child passionately. She too loved life, in a slower, more inert fashion.

"Amhao must go first."

Obediently, her eyes streaming tears, Amhao landed, and as Glava grasped hatchet and spears, she felt within her the fear of death mingling with the elation of combat. She turned and cried:

"The Tzohs are filthy and cowardly victors!"

"The Hidden Lives await the daughters of Wokr to devour them!" A warrior replied amid a chorus of jeers and laughter.

Glava understood the last minute had come, and she said gently: "Amhao is ready?"

"Amhao is ready," the older woman agreed, weeping.

CHAPTER VI.

STRANGE ALLIES.

THE nearest canoe was not more than one hundred arms' lengths away. Suddenly a loud voice called out; an arrow flew over the water, struck a Tzoh in the throat. A wolf howled, dogs barked.

Bewildered, the men of the Rocks stopped paddling, but a second arrow pierced the shoulder of a warrior, and the voice rose again, loud as the howling of an aurochs. The Tzohs were brave, but the law of plain and forest ordained care; the two canoes retreated before the unseen foe.

Quivering with mingled hope and fear, the two women scanned the rocks. A head appeared, young and covered with tawny hair, a face which did not resemble that of the Tzoh. Then a child was seen sliding between the ridges of granite, climbing to the top of the cliff, speaking words which the two women did not understand, although they guessed the meaning of his gestures: the hidden men were friends.

With other gestures, he indicated that the canoe should proceed downstream. Despite many signs, he could not make clear the reason. At the sight of the child, the Tzohs seemed about to come back, but two shouts, one uttered in a deep voice, the other shrill, warned them off.

"The daughters of Wokr must obey!" Glava spoke. "The hidden men are friends."

She was not altogether sure of this,

but her fighter's soul comprehended the need of taking one side or the other. She picked up her paddle. And the canoe resumed its flight downstream, followed, within two arrow flights, by the Tzohs' craft.

The child had vanished and nothing revealed the presence of human beings other than fugitives and pursuers. The Tzohs hurled loud insults at the invisible enemy. The man struck in the throat lay at the bottom of the canoe; the one who had been hit in the shoulder could not stem the blood flowing from his wound.

The passion for life, fierce hope, animated Glava and Amhao. They paddled doggedly, keeping close to shore, beside the tall cliff pitted with caves in which lived eagles, vultures and bats. This cliff suddenly seemed to cave in, a dark defile gaped, into which the river poured with the velocity of a torrent. A strong voice hailed the two women.

They saw a man, two dogs, a wolf and a boy scrambling down toward them. Amhao dropped her paddle from fear, but Glava was not shaken. The stature of the man reared beyond the height of Kzahn the Black Boar, but he was not as massive, and seemed more supple. The face was young, the skull long, and the eyes matched the hue of the river, with jade-green reflections. He made a few hasty signs, indicated the Tzohs with a gesture.

Without hesitation Glava made for the shore. In a flash, man, boy and animals were in the canoe. The stranger spoke.

"The Tzohs took the women of the Ougmars! Helgvor will bring warriors to wipe them out."

He had already snatched Amhao's paddle, for his sure instinct had informed him that she was the weaker, less resolute than her companion. He

directed the craft into the gully. All distrust had left Glava. That warrior's face was lighter than were the fates of the Tzohs, its hue resembled that of her own visage, and that clear complexion, the sinewy, long limbs, pleased her more than the massive structures of men of her tribe. She was ready to obey him, to help him.

The rushing waters hurled the canoe into the defile, and the speed was that of a galloping man. At first, the pursuers did not understand this move, and those in the leading craft saw the fugitives' boat flash in the semi-darkness. Then they guessed that the stranger fleeing with Glava and her sister had no companions save the boy and beasts.

"WE will pursue the canoe!" urged a warrior with enormous shoulders. The others hesitated, pointed at the two wounded men, and one of them voiced the general opinion.

"Are not other warriors hidden in those rocks?"

The crew of the second canoe, which had come near, overheard these words. One of them, Kamr, Son of the Hyena, snorted sarcastically: "Had there been more warriors, Glava and Amhao would not have fled! Shall twelve Tzohs run before a man and two women?"

"Two of our warriors are hit, and Kzahm ordered prudence."

The Son of the Hyena laughed ironically. His strength was great as that of Kzahm, the Black Boar, and in his heart he craved for leadership. "Did Kzahm order us to be cowards? Let two warriors follow Kamr on the bank. If it is deserted, the Tzohs will pursue the women."

He spoke like a chief, and was a chief. His canoe made for the shore, 5 A—28

and he landed with two comrades. They discovered no men among the rocks, saw none on the plain and the majority of the Tzohs were thus convinced; ambushed warriors would have fired arrows and spears at them.

"The Tzohs will pursue the canoe!" Kamr said, returning.

"Kzahm shall be discontented and will punish Kamr," the chief of the first boat objected.

"Kzahm cannot punish six warriors for pursuing a lone man. And the men of the Red Clan are not his slaves!"

The crew of the second canoe belonged to that clan, feared for its courage and spirit of independence. Kzahm had to handle its members carefully.

"Women lose days speaking," Kamr resumed arrogantly. "Let tongues be still. Warriors wish to fight!"

With a violent gesture he picked up the paddle and launched his craft into the rapids. The onrush of the current was such that it grew dangerous to increase progress, and the six men were content to keep their boat away from the rocky walls. At times, strong whirlpools spun the canoe, but the Tzohs were accustomed to water and its traps and did not worry. Kamr sought in vain for the fugitives. Helgvor had too long a lead.

Stubbornly, the warrior refused to be discouraged, and as no attack came from the cliffs, close enough to be within arrow range, he grew certain that there was but one combatant ahead. The cliffs lowered by degrees and soon were no more than a low line of rocks, and the immense surface of the river reappeared. The surface was smooth, slid silently. On the right shore was the plain across which the Tzohs had marched, on the left bank was a virgin forest.

In the middle of the stream the canoe

was safe from surprise, and Kamr triumphantly glanced over the river and sought trace of the fugitives.

But nothing appeared on the broad river.

AS long as the canoe was between the cliffs, Helgvor and Glava thought only of avoiding a wreck. Although the women had repaired the boat, it was more fragile, not as well balanced as the craft of the pursuers. At times the waves threatened to overturn it. Then the man and the girl used all their skill to keep it afloat. Used to the river, both were capable.

They turned to look behind. No canoe appeared on the river, no silhouette rose ashore. And the banks parted widely, until the left strand was almost invisible. When it vanished, finally, the river resumed the aspect of a lake.

Helgvor now looked at the women. Amhao offered the swarthy face of the Tzohs, their bestial jaws, their small, beady eyes. Such appearance did not please men of the Blue River. But Glava was strangely like the women of the Ougmar clan, with her long oval face, her large clear eyes, her hair the color of gold and her flexible torso.

Looking at her, a sweet fervor flooded his chest, comparable to his elation when he roamed the plain in the early dawn. And Glava preferred, to the dark complexion and massive build of the Tzohs, this great body supple as that of a leopard, this face pink as that of a baby.

He tried to make her understand, mingling words and gestures, that the Tzohs had stolen the Ougmars' women. She caught a word here and there, a word which recalled words uttered by

her grandmother from the Green Lakes, for the tongue of the Lakes resembled that of the men of the Blue River. The two races came from a common origin, and primitive terms had remained similar. And in her turn, she undertook to relate her flight, the earthquake in the mountain, the threat of death, the escape in the night.

Although he understood her less than she understood him, he knew that they had formed an alliance. At least he knew their names, repeated with signs. And they knew his name.

"Glava and Amhao will be Ougmar women," he said. "Helgvor will save them."

They progressed on the river, and the enemy did not appear. Nevertheless, Helgvor decided to increase his lead, and Glava helped him with an energy which amazed him. He considered landing, striking out through the forest, but they could not leave the canoe. And the boat, precious help on the river, would be a burden ashore.

Helgvor decided therefore to keep on water as long as no new peril presented itself. He paddled in silence while dim plans for the future came to mind. Vigilant as a warrior, Hiol continuously scanned the surroundings. As they rounded a headland, he uttered an exclamation, then, his piercing glance directed upstream, spoke.

"The Tzohs are back."

Helgvor and Glava, while steering the craft out of a whirlpool, gazed behind, and saw, very far away, a canoe. Had they not expected it, they might have mistaken it for a crocodile or a tree-trunk floating on the water. Then their sharp eyes discerned dim silhouettes which were those of men, and Helgvor repeated, looking at Glava: "The Tzohs!"

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

Helgvor of the Blue River

By J. H. ROSNY AINÉ with
GEORGES SURDEZ

The bear rose, staggering, then dropped back upon the saber-toothed tiger



Upon Helgvor, proud young warrior, rested the burden of tracking down the ferocious cave men who had despoiled his clan

THIS STORY HAS JUST BEGUN—START IT NOW.

IT was in the days before civilization's dawn that Helgvor, tall young warrior of the Blue River clan, returned from sentry duty near the camp of his tribe to see the defenceless children and old men slaughtered by a party of raiding Tzohs, men from the East, who strike while Helgvor's fellow warriors are away hunting.

Taking the women of the tribe with them as captives, the Tzohs start back toward their own country. Helgvor trails them, leaving word with the few survivors that he will locate their lair, then return to lead the warriors of the Blue River against the marauders.

Accompanying Helgvor is the boy Hiolg, a stripling in size but stealthy as a leopard and with a heart that does not know fear. With their two dogs and the wolf that Helgvor has trained, they follow the slowly moving caravan as it winds along the river.

On that same river is a canoe bearing two women of the Tzoh clan, Glava and her elder sister Amhao, who has her child with her. They fled their tribe when Amhao was ordained a sacrifice to the god of the Mountain.

Two canoes filled with Tzoh warriors sight the women, start in pursuit. Helgvor, watching from the conceal-

This story began in the *Argosy* for May 28.

ment of the river bank, wounds two of the warriors with arrows. Recognizing him as a friend, the two women take him and Hioig into their canoe and the chase begins anew. Kamr, leader of the pursuers, is determined to capture the women and slay Helgvor.

CHAPTER VII.

BESIEGED.

THE fugitives' canoe, close to a thickly bushed bank, must be difficult to discern. Helgvor steered still closer to land, so that the craft would be all the more difficult to espy from afar. Before rounding a bend, he cast a last glance behind.

There was still but one canoe in sight. Was the second one slower, or had it given up? He did not dwell long on the question, and came to a decision. Ten thousand arms' lengths away, the real bush started, where he could prepare an ambush. In the thicket, his wolf was capable of downing a warrior; his two dogs, less robust, could worry an enemy. Glava seemed ready to show fight, and he, Helgvor, was the best bowman among the Ougmars; and, with a single club blow, he dropped his man.

Although she still paddled vigorously, Glava was beginning to show fatigue. She had been struggling since morning. Helgvor took her paddle and gave it to Amhao, who had rested somewhat. The pursuers were not seen again until the bush was within five thousand arms' lengths.

From then on, they gained steadily. Not only was their craft better constructed, but what availed Helgvor, seconded by a woman, against six mighty paddlers? He thought only of reaching the bush. To get there in

time, it was enough for the canoe to go half as fast as that of the Tzohs.

For two thousand arms' lengths, he contrived to keep his distance very well. His strength was intact, and his skill made up for the weakness and clumsiness of Amhao. But before long, the woman tired again, and the advantage of the foes became considerable. Had not Glava picked up the paddle again, it would have been impossible to reach shelter in time.

"Glava is as brave as a warrior!" shouted Helgvor, warm admiration in his eyes.

She did not understand the words, but smiled at the gesture, while her heart swelled with happiness. Already, her effort showed results: the distance separating the two canoes dwindled slowly, and Helgvor could hope to reach his goal before danger became pressing. At the same time, he was elated because the second Tzoh boat had not come in sight. The last minutes were arduous; despite her courage, Glava faltered, but he, stiffening his muscles, fought against fate with frantic ardor.

"Oah!" he shouted triumphantly.

They had reached the bush and the Tzohs were three hundred arms' lengths late, could not see the canoe bearing Helgvor and his companions skimming under the bending branches of the weeping willows, up a narrow tributary of the main river. This stream had two outlets. Helgvor paddled up one of them slowly. Before attaining the tip of the island formed by the delta, a marshy stretch appeared on the left bank, thick with reeds.

"If Glava has no strength left," he said, "Glava need not paddle longer."

The canoe reached a haven in the marsh, a cove sheltered by enormous

willows and gigantic poplar trees. Helgvor pushed the canoe into a tangle of reeds, picked up his weapons.

All was quiet. The Tzohs must have gone by the river's mouth. But their return must be feared, for they would soon discover that the fugitives had vanished. Doubtless, they would hesitate a while before the two outlets, then before the marsh. Only luck would bring them upon the canoe hidden in the reeds!

GLAVA had watched Helgvor's stratagem with admiration, and with the eagerness of youth she wished to laugh despite the peril. But Helgvor already was dragging his companions through the bush. When it grew too thickly he sought an easier path; often he opened the way with his hatchet. Soon tall trees appeared, with parasitic plants swirling in their shade. Then the fugitives came to a clearing, in the center of which were several great boulders.

"Helgvor, Hiolg, Glava and Amhao shall stop here."

The Son of Shtira chose a space surrounded with stones, in which one found shelter from projectiles. He then spoke to the wolf and the dogs. They knew the words that ordered silence, watchfulness or fight: on this occasion he told them to remain quiet and alert. Their admirable senses caught all variations in the atmosphere; the scent of the dogs surpassed that of the wolf, but the wolf heard better.

Helgvor stationed them in the three inlets into the circle of stones, then examined his weapons. He had his club, the hatchet, a bow, two spears and five arrows. The weapons of the women consisted of a club, four spears, two hatchets and a sharpened stake. Hiolg had a child's bow and one spear. The

wolf was to be counted upon; and the dogs, although small, might be of help in a hand to hand combat.

The fugitives ate dried meat hastily, then Helgvor and Hiolg sought to make their inclosure more secure. They barred the outlets with spiny branches, leaving only narrow lanes for the animals; if any Tzoh sought to crawl in, he could be stunned with ease. Meanwhile, the women watched between the boulders.

Several times Helgvor felt a desire to increase the distance between them and the pursuers, but Amhao was too tired to carry on. Even Glava was struggling against utter fatigue. If the Tzohs found their tracks, they would soon make up for lost time, and the fight would be forced upon the ill-assorted group in the open. Here, the rocks afforded protection, and the women were recuperating enough to be of use.

In the depth of the forest the branches cast thicker shadow, and the sun appeared to swell as it neared the tree-tops. Because their souls and their races were young, the thought of perils dwindled in Helgvor, Glava and Amhao: they grew certain that the Tzohs had lost the tracks.

Before a man could walk ten thousand paces, twilight kneaded the clouds into obscurity. Their shelter seemed sure. They would pass the night there. At times, Helgvor and Glava exchanged gestures or words. Already repetition had started a common speech. Glava grasped language quicker than the Ougmar, for the memory of her grandmother's muttered words, in the tongue of the Green Lakes, was growing clearer and she was thus better able to comprehend Helgvor's articulations.

Amhao took small part in those

efforts at conversation. Passive, nonchalant in spirit, tired, occupied by her child, she yielded to the energy of her companions. The little one fascinated Hiolg, who brought laughter upon the flabby, round face of the baby. Habit was being formed among those people, and the sensation of strangeness and contrast was dwindling, even for Amhao, who, more than Glava, was aware that she was an alien to the tall nomad.

SHORTLY before nightfall the dogs stirred uneasily, and the wolf prowled outside the inclosure. Although Helgvor and his people listened tensely, they heard nothing save the murmur of the wind through the branches and the sounds of insects. But the dogs and the wolf could be depended upon; they scented a foe, man or beast, within the atmosphere. The eyes of the wolf glowered, and the dogs turned often to look at their master inquiringly.

Helgvor whistled gently. It was an order for silence. In any case, unless the man permitted, the dogs and the wolf never barked or howled before a prey or before danger. However, their agitation increased; the wolf slunk about softly, the dogs slid in and out of the openings left for them, returned with their teeth showing in a mute snarl.

"It is a tiger, a lion, a gray bear—or the Tzohs!" Helgvor stated, adjusting his bow. Glava clutched her club, preferring to leave her spear to the warrior.

Then Helgvor and Hiolg, with their ears pressed against the soil, heard distinct soft steps which were unmistakable to them.

"The Tzohs are coming!"

Even Amhao understood the gesture, and Hiolg started to laugh at her

fears, for he believed Helgvor invincible. Although less confident than the boy, Glava was elated at the thought of fighting at the warrior's side. The steps halted, and the nomad guessed that the enemy had paused on the fringe of the clearing and that the inclosure was being examined with great care. On both sides was the same silence, the same prudence, as of felines in ambush.

The nearest tree was within arrow-shot, and all about the inclosure there was nothing but grass and a few bushes too thin and scattered to protect a man. For a while, the stillness was so complete that Helgvor might have believed he had been mistaken, had the attitude of his beasts allowed uncertainty. Identical rage stiffened their muscles and dilated their pupils.

Since he had identified human steps, the Ougmar did not permit them to roam outside, and, accustomed to ambush, they waited, at once patient and eager. The four fugitives were watching, each one at a loophole, and Amhao showed herself as alert as the others. At length Hiolg, who faced west, came to touch Helgvor's shoulder.

"A Tzoh in trees!"

Helgvor turned gently, reaching out for his bow. A Tzoh was climbing an ash tree, screened by the branches of a large sycamore. The fellow, having risen half-way up the trunk, could see into the inclosure. At that distance, no Tzoh bow could have reached him with an arrow, but the tall Ougmars had weapons that carried very far, and Helgvor had the mightiest one in the clan.

His eyes fastened on the climber, the nomad waited until the left shoulder and part of the torso showed; he tightened the string, released a missile. He meant to hit the chest, but the dis-

tance was too great; despite his calculations, the arrow only pierced the hand of the climbing man.

With a cry of rage, the Tzoh slid down along the bole, struck the ground heavily, while his comrades, knowing they had been discovered, roared frantically. The resounding voice of the Ougmar launched the war cry, and because silence had become useless, Hiolg and Glava also shouted, while the dogs barked furiously and the wolf howled as on hunger nights.

"The Tzohs are vultures lacking courage! They shall perish under the hatchet, the spear and the arrow!"

"The Tzohs took the women from the Men of the Blue River," the chief of the enemy jeered. "The Men of the Blue River are stupid as sheep and slugs."

THE clamors died out after leaving the mouths of the criers, and silence settled down again, weighted with anxiety. Helgvor was wondering if the warriors of the second canoe had joined those of the first. The voices he had heard revealed five or six men, but that might have been prearranged, some of the new arrivals might have purposely remained quiet.

The red furnace of the sun seemed to devour the western forest, then the clouds, the hue of flowers and fire, created a universe wider than that of the forests, the lakes, the plains and the rivers. That limitless life was dying out with every quiver of the leaves; the strange ashes of darkness were spreading the murderous night.

It was the hour when weak animals know that meat-eaters are leaving their dens.

Formidable voices exchanged menaces. The lion roared, wolves

howled, and the jackals added their sharp yelps to the sinister laughter of the hyena. When there remained no light save the weak glow of the stars, the aspect of the clearing became awe-inspiring.

In the granite inclosure, human beings and animals found their night senses growing keener, while the Tzohs discerned the shelter of the Ougmars and the women only as a shadowy mass. All was still, the quiet of ambush.

The wild beasts were prowling. The Tzohs wished to surprise the tall nomad. They had scouted the obstacle, and knew where the spears and stones would come from, but an attack might be made in vain against those sheltered behind the protecting boulders.

Kamr with the bull's chest said: "If the Tzohs are to attack, why wait? Will not the Man of the Blue River and his animals be ready for combat all night long? And Kzahm, our chief, is waiting for us on the island."

"How attack?" a warrior, whose face was seamed with deep scars, asked.

"Night is dark. The Tzohs shall crawl through the grass, and when Kamr utters the war yell, we shall leap in all together."

"That's well," the other admitted. "But the bow of the River Man must be dreaded."

"The River Man cannot aim on a moonless night! Are five Tzohs afraid of a lone Ougmar?"

"Woum is not scared," proudly replied the one with the scars.

And the five men started the crawl. Half of the space which they must cross was thick with high grass and ferns, which concealed them from human eyes. But the nostrils of the wolf

and dogs did not fail. From them, Helgvor knew that the Tzohs were approaching. But when he pressed his ear against the sod, the sounds made by roaming animals outside prevented discerning the progress of the enemy.

With a flint stone he lit an armful of dried grass in a hollow of the soil, made torches from two branches. A strong glow lighted the inclosure, and cast some light into the clearing.

"When the Tzohs rise in the short grass," he addressed the boy, "Hiolg shall raise the torches so that Helgvor can see the enemy."

IN their intense excitement, the dogs were pushing their pointed muzzles through the gaps; the wolf growled deeply. Almost simultaneously, Hiolg, Helgvor and Glava perceived movements in the shorter grass. The boy picked up the torches and, standing on a bowlder, illuminated the clearing. The quivering rays revealed the presence of the Tzohs. Helgvor bent his bow, discharged two arrows swiftly. One scratched a foe's shoulder, the second sank beneath the collar-bone. The man dropped the club grasped in his right fist, uttered a great cry. Helgvor now had but two arrows left.

Startled by the torchlight and the skill of the tall nomad, the Tzohs hugged the ground, became invisible. The torches cast an oscillating radiance which made surprise out of the question. The inclosure must be besieged or stormed. Having engaged himself in the venture, already responsible for the wounding of two men, in the grip of mad fury and intense hatred against Kzahn, whose scorn he feared, Kamr resolved to risk everything.

"The Tzohs will leap ahead," he ordered, "and kill the River Man."

"Two Tzohs have been wounded here, two were wounded in Houa's canoe," retorted the scarred man.

"Have the Tzohs forgotten vengeance?" Kamr snarled. "Do Tzohs tremble like storks before an eagle? If the River Man does not perish with the two women who have betrayed the clans, the Tzohs must go home trembling, and the Ougmars' women will laugh in their faces! The River Man is alone. I shall slay him with blows of my club!"

This was not too boastful. All knew that Kamr had attacked leopards with his hatchet, and on a day of great hunting, he had slain a lion.

"While Kamr attacks the River Man, the warriors shall beat down the women and the beasts."

Kamr uttered the war cry, and the four men bounded forward through the grass. An arrow hummed, struck the ground, then a second scratched the arm of a warrior without weakening him. Tzohs reached the enclosure and scaled it rapidly, with the vigor of strong young men.

Helgvor held his spears, and Glava made ready to help him. Almost at the same moment, the warriors appeared on the crest of the rocks. Hiolg had quickly put out the fire, extinguished the torches. There remained only the light of the stars, and in the violet night silhouettes were indistinct as vapors.

Plans were forgotten. Helgvor swung a club, Glava used a spear, and Hiolg threw stones. An assailant collapsed under the rain of blows, another was pierced through the shoulder by Glava's weapon, but despite his injury, he leaped down into the inclosure followed by Kamr and the remaining warrior. The dogs leaped; Glava fought desperately.

Hiolg was helping the wolf, which had caught a warrior at the neck, from behind. Frightened at first, Amhao darted forward to take her share of the struggle.

Kamr and Helgvor were face to face.

THEY were powerful fighting machines, equal in bulk, energy and courage, unlike in build. With his cubical head, his chest rounded as the chests of animals, Kamr represented the race of the Tzohs, sprung from volcanic soil, while Helgvor, with his long skull, his broad, flat chest, his long limbs, was the perfect descendant of the people who lived by the Green Lakes and the Blue River. The hatred of their ancestors flamed in them, they were animated by obscure legends, ancestral memories and incompatible instincts.

The clubs whirled. In that corner of the enclosure, where they had much space to move in, Kamr insulted Helgvor and his ancestors, while the Ougmar predicted the vengeance of his tribe. Each held a spear in the left hand. In the semi-darkness, Helgvor was lighter than Kamr, whose head melted into the night.

Kamr thrust with his spear, but Helgvor broke the weapon with a swing of his club. But the club of Kamr fell like a stone. The heavy weapons clashed together, and Helgvor staggered. With a long howl, the Tzoh tried to complete his victory, but the tip of Helgvor's spear menaced his breast, and Kamr prudently leaped to safety.

The spear, barely visible in the darkness, struck his shoulder, but did not sink beneath the skin. For a very brief moment they took breath, face to face, waited for an opportunity. Near them,

in the obscurity, wolf, dogs, the women and the boy were fighting the other Tzohs.

Then Kamr resumed the attack, and again the clubs clashed with such mighty impact that they whirled from the men's fists.

"The River Man shall die!" Kamr growled.

He leaped forward, clasped Helgvor in his arms. Among the Tzohs, Kamr was admitted to be the strongest in a fight without weapons, where body and limbs' clash. Even Kzalm, the Black Boar, so formidable with hatchet and club, would have been beaten. So Kamr was confident, and when he had grasped the Ougmar around the body, he panted with joy and lifted his foe off the ground.

Helgvor gripped Kamr by the throat. As they fell, then rolled over and over on the ground, Kamr had the advantage at first, having secured the better hold. But his breath grew short, his mouth gaped to inhale. His nerves weakened so that the Ougmar was able to throw aside the heavy body, and Kamr gurgled, flat on his back, the cartilage of his neck broken, smashed by the nomad's powerful fingers.

After a few quivers, the enormous body became motionless in a last spasm.

"Thus shall die the Tzohs, ravishers of women!" Helgvor cried.

Picking up the club, he ran to assist the women.

Amhao was down, struck by a bronze hatchet and a spear. Glava and the wolf had slain a man, but the girl, bloody and battered, was about to give way before the onslaught of the remaining Tzoh, who had just stunned Hiolg.

The Ougmar leaped like a leopard.

It was not a fight. Twice the heavy weapon fell, and the last Tzoh dropped.

The tall nomad shouted his victory to the gleaming stars.

CHAPTER VIII.

PAIN AND DEATH.

HELGVOR relit the fire. In the glare of the purple flames, he saw the blood flow on the face, the arms and the chest of Glava. Amhao seemed dead, pierced by deep wounds. Hiolg, stunned with a club, was beginning to regain consciousness. One of the dogs was dying. The other licked his wounds, while the wolf shook himself in an attempt to rid his flank of a protruding spear.

A grim sadness overcame Helgvor. He alone was strong, for without him, women, children and animals would have died. Yet he himself had been saved by their courage. The nomad left the inclosure to pluck the leaves and the bitter-tasting plants which Ougmars crushed to cover wounds. When he returned, he noticed that Hiolg's head, although swollen near the temple, was not bleeding. Life was coming back into the boy's eyes.

Having crushed the leaves and grasses, Helgvor applied them as he had seen done by those who knew ancestral secrets. Then he carried the bodies of the Tzohs and the carcass of the dog outside the inclosure, to avoid the annoyance of wild beasts attracted by freshly spilled blood. He saw the dead man left in the clearing, but he saw no trace of the man whose hand he had pierced with an arrow.

His fatigue was extreme. He looked at Amhao, who was motionless, at Glava, not much better off, at Hiolg, who stirred. Only the wolf and the dog could have resumed the fight.

"Helgvor shall watch until mid-

night," he murmured. "Then it will be Hiolg's turn."

Squatted near the fire, he listened to the sounds of the forest, haunted by furtive lives. At intervals could be heard call and menace, cries of alliance, cries of murder, the voices of victory and despair, agonized plaints. Already the prowlers were crawling toward the fresh prey, still bleeding, which even the large beasts would not scorn.

The rising moon, half-disk of burnished copper, which paled as it rose, covered the clearing with uncertain light. The peaceful smells of vegetables passed in the light night wind. A bat hovered on its membraned wings, fell to the ferns, then two hyenas appeared, their dirty gray pelts streaked with brown. Odd beasts, with blazing eyes, with backs sloping sharply from head to tail, luck had served them well, for their sense of smell was poor.

With sinister chuckles, they smelled the too fresh corpses, and their formidable jaws, powerful as those of lions or tigers, ripped bellies open. Rovers with subtle scent, eyes aglow, slinking forth lightly, the jackals came, light as cats, ears pointed. Here was prey in abundance, eternal hunger increased their avidity, but already five wolves emerged from the night, rough guests which growled threateningly. Then came a wildcat, sliding through the grass, and a screech-owl swooped silently.

When the wolves growled, the hyenas started. Bitter and mournful, the jackals yelped. Hatred and hunger stiffened their spines. Eyes gleamed, teeth glittered in the red maws, an identical instinct for life and death stirred in the timid jackals, in the cowardly hyenas, in the wise wolves.

The jackals were aware of their weakness, and even in numbers did not

dare fight. The hyenas knew their jaws could crunch the wolves' bones. The wolves, alert and angry, estimated the prey; when they saw that there was a share for them, they howled louder to indicate their determination, and took two of the corpses. The jackals surrounded the body farthest from the rest. The hyenas, possessing Kamr, another warrior and the dead dog, understood that a truce had come about, and resumed eating.

SUDDENLY twigs crackled, and a rough, thick body crushed small trees. The animal coming forward, supple and heavy at the same time in his gray fur, with his flat skull and enormous claws, disturbed the meal. All knew his might and his brutal temper.

At the sight of the gathering he halted, swayed on his massive paws, his tiny eyes gleaming through coarse hair. Then he stated his will with an imperious grunt. All stopped eating and stared at the intruder. Even those who had never encountered him before understood the menace. He was larger than a tiger, and yielded to none save the mammoth and the rhinoceros.

The wolves being nearer than the hyenas, he drove them away. With long howls, quivering with rage, indignation and hatred, they left. The bear laid one paw on a corpse. The wolves, slinking back, dragged the other away. Bending over his prey, the huge beast paid no attention to them; a cheek and a shoulder had been devoured, but the meat was fresh, oozing blood, and it would not have been otherwise had the bear made the kill himself. Satisfied, he set to work. His fangs sank into a thigh. He felt a sweet pleasure in sating a violent hunger.

While he was tearing strips of flesh,
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the forest sent forth a new prowler, the formidable odor of which had been scented by wolves and jackals for some time.

The head appeared first, compact, with two streaks of orange hair and great yellowish eyes which palpitated like enormous stars. The feline yawned, and revealed a crimson cavern in which the fangs stood out like long, white daggers. He roared and swelled his broad chest, his flanks streaked with somber markings, worked his sharp claws on the grounds. All knew him at once, save the gray bear, who came from the mountain, and all were in the grip of terror.

If the gray bear did not know him, he did not know the gray bear. He knew only a brown bear which never dared face him. He was startled to see this one, with the ease of a victor, continue to eat his prey. It happened that if beasts, with the exception of mammoth and rhinoceros, avoided the tiger, in his home mountain, the gray bear acknowledged no rival.

The tiger roared a second time. As the bear was nearest to him, the bear must give up his place. Fury had come, the insane rage that distends the breast.

The bear understood that he was being threatened. He stopped feeding, turned his snout slowly toward the tiger. Before the immense, fiery eyes, his little bloodshot pupils seemed weak, lost in thick hair, pale as glow-worms. But the size of the bear was greater than that of the tiger.

Gathered on his broad paws, swinging his colossal body, the great bear answered the roar with a lordly grunt. He was the descendant of hot-tempered ancestors, and his rage was so swift, so intense, that his breath rustled the grass. Yet the effluvia met before the bodies came into contact, and each one

knew dimly that the other was a worthy foe.

BECAUSE his breed is prudent, the tiger stalked aside to launch a flank attack. The bear waited no longer, and as the tiger came on he clawed out, yet he did not stop that hairy mass hurtling like a bolt. Then teeth, claws, muscles met, blood dripped through the fur, over the short hair. The bear had downed the tiger, but the feline rolled aside, put the larger beast off balance, and they formed a confused whirl of bodies from which rose raucous clamors.

The tiger leaped aside, and the bear sought to clutch him again. They were face to face, red with the blood of ten wounds, each now fully aware of the power of his opponent. Perhaps there was some hesitation. But pain, hatred, the lust for revenge, shot their quivering bulks to the fight.

The tiger fell, the bear sank his fangs in the depth of the flesh, but one of his paws became useless, crushed. The huge chests creaked with the efforts. The tiger groped for another paw. But the jaws of the bear slashed into his enemy's throat, wrenched at it, pierced it, dug into it.

When the feline succumbed, the bear rose, staggering, uttered a grunt of pain, then, weakened by loss of blood, dropped back to the ground. Then a dim joy stirred the jackals, the wolves and the hyenas, and from everywhere frailer beasts who had witnessed the combat emerged from the grasses, the bushes, the forest.

It was a subtle swarming of pupils, of paws, of muzzles, the secret life, the unquenchable life, and already the devouring tiger, whose scent alone caused the multitude to flee, was sniffed by voracious nostrils, felt by small teeth.

Helgvor had indistinctly seen, through the brush and the tall ferns, the coming of hyenas, wolves and jackals, then the fierce battle. The wind brought together the sweet odors of the vegetation and the stench of the animals. He heard the gray bear growling, the tiger roar. Then had come a prolonged silence, broken by pants, weak cries and muffled moans.

Which had won? Or had they both been wounded, and given up the struggle? He thought that one or the other might remain near the inclosure, and then danger would be feared, night or day. His tribe at times hunted the huge cats. Helgvor, with arrows, hatchet and club, had killed a lion. But he had been badly wounded himself, had remained unconscious for hours. Had he been alone, the prowling beasts would have devoured him.

He remembered that, knew he was tired. He feared that he would not fight well, due to fatigue. For a space the wolf growled, the dog smelled the air. Then they sank to the ground, and slept.

CHAPTER IX.

TO THE VICTOR—

HELGVOR was still asleep when day came. Squatted near the ashes of the fire, Hiolg was dozing. There was joy in the trees and upon the earth. The night seemed eternal each time, because death roamed and all the weak feared they might fill the bellies of the strong. But when darkness was vanquished, hope was boundless; the birds sang, facing the rising sun. Hiolg touched Helgvor gently, and the warrior rose instantly. Like a wild animal, he was always on the alert, and rose club in hand.

"The eyes of Hiolg no longer see, his ears no longer hear!" the child said.

"Hiolg can sleep," the man said.

The sun shed an amber light through the branches of the trees, dispelling the mists of the morning. Only the bones of the Tzohs were left, and the tiger was a skeleton also. The bear, still alive, kept the greedy jaws at bay.

Helgvor inhaled the fresh air, the creating air, and his youth swelled in a flooding of happiness, his victory filled him with limitless strength. Turning his eyes toward the two women and the child, he believed Amhao dead until he saw her chest rise and fall perceptibly. Glava, weak from bleeding, slumbered.

The wolf and the dog, awakened by hunger, turned trusting eyes toward their master. They were granted their share of the dry meat. Then, stirring up the fire, the Ougmar cooked his meal. The mysterious force of the food increased his joy of living, his tenderness; these women, these children, even the wolf and the dog, saved by his courage and his muscles, seemed part of his own being.

When the sun had dissipated the fog, Helgvor left the inclosure and found the skeletons of the Tzohs, near the fleshless bones of the tiger. As the warrior drew near, the gray bear lifted his head, which was swarming with insects, and a veil appeared to screen his pupils. His gaping wounds festered, his death was certain. As Helgvor halted to stare at him, a painful snarl of menace lifted the hairy lips.

"The great bear shall not hunt any more!" the nomad said. "Long he has caused the horse, the stag, even the aurochs, to tremble. He has killed the tiger. The great bear is almost as mighty as the mammoth—and the great bear is about to die!"

The erect beasts loved to utter words to fit circumstances, and the Ougmar loved speech.

"The great bear is about to die," the hunter repeated. "He will be torn to pieces by the jackal, the wolf and the hyena. But his flesh is good for man also, and the Ougmar has not enough to feed his women and children. The great bear must give of his flesh."

A doe raced by, within arrow range. Helgvor felt that it was better to allow her to pass, for she was fitted to reproduce life. The doomed beast would supply meat without waste of life. He picked up his spear, selected a spot through which to reach the heart. The blade sank in, moved about. The bear uttered a groan of agony, but his weakness was so great, so like death, that he scarcely quivered.

"The great bear would have suffered until night," resumed the Son of Shtra, "and perhaps the wolf and the hyena would have devoured him alive."

He picked up the scattered arrows, a few tools left by the Tzohs, spears, three bronze hatchets, then went back to the bear; he cut off both hams and some slices of tender meat. The pelt was very handsome. He would skin the animal later, if he had time. Thirst was searing his mouth, and he sought for water, found a source where he drank deeply.

GOING back to the inclosure, he found all quiet. The dog and the wolf were again asleep, but Glava was awakening. The flow of blood had stopped, her wounds were not deep, and she was moaning, bending over Amhao.

"Amhao shall not die!" the nomad assured her.

Glava understood his gestures, and a smile spread on her blood-stained

face. Then, seeing her arms blackened and reddened, she desired to wash them. He guessed that she must be thirsty as well, and pointed to the forest.

"Helgvor found a spring."

There were three water-skins, roughly made. One belonged to Helgvor, the others he had found on the Tzohs. The warrior indicated that he was going to fill them, and Glava wished to go with him. But her legs still quivered under her weight.

"Helgvor shall go with Hiolg."

He also took the animals along.

When Glava had drunk, she hid behind a bowlder to wash her body. Meanwhile, Helgvor cooked some meat for her, and as she ate, he found pleasure in watching that light-colored face in which gleamed eyes the hue of the river.

"Why doesn't she resemble the Tzohs?" he wondered.

Glancing at Amhao, he compared the cubical head, the wide face, the heavy jaws of the elder with the delicate features of the girl. Their complexions differed oddly, too. That of Amhao was the color of oak bark, with coppery glints; that of Glava almost white, like the petals of a flower. Amhao's torso was bulky as that of a sow, Glava's flexible like that of a doe. Glava was tall and lithe.

"Amhao is a daughter of the rocks. But Glava is like the daughters of the Green Lakes and the Blue River."

Proud to have saved her, he admired her because she had fought with the courage and skill of a warrior. Amhao awoke when her child cried. Although dazed and dull, she recognized her sister.

"Amhao is saved," Glava informed her. "The tall warrior of the River has killed off those who attacked us!"

The young woman listened vaguely. She could neither see nor hear clearly. She repeated: "Amhao is saved."

She drank water greedily, but could eat nothing. She fell asleep as Glava washed her face.

Helgvor thought as a warrior thinks. Of the danger, of the human foes, of animals. He did not plan to pick up the trail of the Tzohs, for he counted upon Glava to guide the Ougmars to their homes. But what had become of the sixth enemy, of which the wolf and the dog found no trace?

He could not go away by canoe. Often the river was too rapid for the strength of several men; in a large craft, a single paddler would be helpless. Would the man join his clan on foot? The road was long, particularly for a wounded man. The Ougmar called the child.

"Hear me, Hiolg: Helgvor and the dog, Hiolg and the wolf, will seek the tracks of the wounded Man of the Rocks. Helgvor will not go far, for he must watch the inclosure. Hiolg must not fight. When he has seen the Tzoh, he comes back."

"The Man of the Rocks is wounded," the boy replied. "Perhaps the wolf can finish him."

"Hiolg shall not fight!" Helgvor ordered. "Hiolg shall remain unseen. And he shall return here when the sun starts to set."

No warrior could conceal himself better than the boy in ferns and grass, in rocks or bushes.

"Hiolg will hide like a fox!" he stated.

THEY sought for tracks. Helgvor returned to the inclosure often, while Hiolg carried on into the forest. His memory for sites and trails was extraordinary, his mind retained

the image of every step taken. Many heavy beasts had walked about, the tracks of the Tzoh could not be picked up. Hiolg walked toward the marsh and the river, but scouted to one side or the other often. The wolf helped him, but, being less docile when with the child than with the man, he roamed more or less as he liked.

The child and the animal found the tracks almost at the same time. It was on moist soil in which the man's feet had left deep imprints. Because there were many, perhaps also because he deemed his lead too great for pursuit, the Tzoh had made no effort to conceal them.

Hiolg allowed the wolf to scent them a long while, then resumed the hunt, increasing his wariness, dilating his sharp pupils. A great pride distended his puny chest, the soul of a warrior welled within him.

At length he espied the man. Stretched on the ground, weakened, tired and fierce, feverish from his wound, the warrior thought gloomily of the defeat inflicted on Kamr and his companions. Lurking in the darkness, he had witnessed the struggle, and when all the Tzohs had fallen, he had gone into the forest. He had not slept much, constantly awakened by inner tremors of fear, gripped by panic, his right hand useless. Despite his bronze hatchet, he had become a weak animal.

This morning his head was not clear and he heard humming in his ears the threat of secret dangers; it was a bad omen, which often announced the death of wounded warriors. The hum increased as the sun rose higher. Tzoum, son of the Stag, had applied grass to the wound, but the compress did not ease his pain: the hole was black and burning; he felt the pulse beat in the raw flesh.

Prone at the foot of a sycamore tree, he felt the terror of being alone, far from friends, far from home caves. The defeat of Kamr depressed him as much as the wound; his race had proved the weaker, and that weakness he felt in his bowels.

"The Tzohs are mightiest," he muttered, to give himself cheer, and because he had a strong love for his breed.

HIDDEN in the bushes, Hiolg trembled as he identified him.

The wounded warrior was the very man who had captured the boy's mother and slain his grandfather. Because he was young, Hiolg was forgetting, had consoled himself already, but the sight of the Tzoh made his memory flare up blindingly, and aroused the child to fury.

"The Tzoh has no spear," he mused. "His hand is sick. Hiolg and the wolf are stronger."

The warrior, a man of thick torso, short of legs, long of arms, had an enormous face and thick hair which fell down over his sloping forehead almost to the eyes, which, like those of the bison, were set high up toward the temples. His strength must be that of the great boar. And the child held the wolf and said ardently:

"Hiolg must not fight. But the Tzoh took away Hiolg's mother."

The wolf sniffed the warrior's scent, stronger because of the man's illness. He recalled the Tzoh he had strangled on the preceding evening. Suddenly he broke free, and slid to the tree under which the warrior lay. His walk was as silent as the flight of a night bird, but he frightened a rabbit, which fled madly.

The Tzoh turned, saw the wolf, and rose proudly, hatchet in his left hand.

"Tzoum has slain ten wolves. A wolf is no stronger than a deer before a Tzoh's hatchet. Tzoum laughs at the wolf!"

The eyes of the wolf glowered; those of Tzoum glittered with fever, and the man lied: he was afraid. He was afraid because he was on alien soil, because the unknown voices whistled shrilly in his ears, because Kamr had died despite his strength, and because the wolf's ways were not those of wild wolves.

"Tzoum shall offer a sacrifice to the Hidden Lives!" Tzoum promised.

The wolf circled the man. His neck was powerful, his teeth fine and pointed: he showed them, parting his jaws in a snarl of threat and defiance. Tzoum whirled the hatchet about his head. It was of the finest bronze, very sharp.

"Tzoum has slain larger wolves than the black wolf."

Backed against the tree, he did not see Hiolg, creeping near like a snake. The wolf scented the man's weakness, and seeing Hiolg coming, he did not move, held his ground, eying the warrior sideways. The Son of the Stag, sure that he had frightened the beast, cried out louder:

"With a single stroke, Tzoum can cleave the skull of the wolf."

A sharp sting in his thigh made him quiver, his knee gave beneath his weight. Hiolg's spear had struck him. Startled, the warrior turned, and while he turned, with a single leap, the wolf was at his throat. Then the child drew out the spear, struck again. The big man crumpled like an uprooted tree, while the beast clung, strangling him. In a flash, Tzoum saw the caves, the warriors, the women, then he slipped into the shadows. The wolf lapped his hot blood.

Hiolg, recalling the words and gestures of warriors, clamored stridently: "Hiolg and the black wolf have slain the big warrior. Hiolg and the wolf are the stronger!"

When he reached the inclosure, with the bronze hatchet and the fur garment of the Tzoh, the child said: "Hiolg did not wish to fight. But he could not hold back the wolf. And the Tzoh had taken the mother of Hiolg. Hiolg stabbed his thigh twice, and the wolf strangled the warrior."

"That is well," Helgvor said, his hand on the little fellow's head: "Hiolg shall be a warrior, and even a chief, when the time comes."

Boundless happiness flooded Hiolg.

At the end of two days, Glava's wounds were healing. The blood had ceased flowing, the flesh was dry, and the ache was scarcely noticeable, save during the night, and the girl could walk easily. Amhao healed more slowly. Nevertheless, rich in youth, her life was resuming. Already, habit united the man and the two women. They admired his strength, his size and his courage.

According to ancestral instinct, Amhao was willing to obey the orders of Helgvor, who now seemed her master. Glava differed from her as a she wolf differs from a doe: A will for freedom flamed in her, the same urge that had taken her away from the caves, the same which had brought her into the solitude of the forest and caused her to fight like a male warrior.

Unimpressed, she was near Helgvor as an equal. He, by instinct and in gratitude for her courage, understood and accepted her pride. In any case, she intimidated him somewhat, and this unusual timidity thrilled him so that he did not wish to react against it.

They combined their skill and knowledge. Glava knew how to handle a needle and could weave cloth. Helgvor made stout weapons and delicate tools with stone, with horn, with bones. But they had weapons aplenty: the spears, hatchets, bows and arrows of the Tzohs had been collected. Helgvor honed the edges and the points.

The words and gestures they exchanged so often became less obscure. Glava was learning Ougmar. Her memories, formerly forgotten, welled to the surface of her mind. The words spoken by her grandmother made other words easy to understand. Helgvor made little effort to speak Tzoh, for he hated the language of his foes.

He learned that Amhao had been fated for sacrifice when Glava had forced her to flee. He knew also, now, that the Tzohs lived upstream, more than two moons' march from the Ougmar camp. Since her mother's death, Glava had only bad memories, save those of Amhao; she hated the Tzohs more than before the flight, aware that if the fugitives were recaptured, they would be put to death. Thus her fate was linked to that of the Son of Shtra.

IN the presence of Glava, the nomad experienced unknown sensations.

Growing more slowly than the Tzohs, the young Ougmars, until at an age decided by the old men, had no right to take a woman.

Glava knew more, for the Tzohs obeyed brutal and sensual instinct. But what she had seen filled her with horrified disgust. The chief, Urm, or another old man broke with a stone the canine teeth of the girl, indicating that the woman was thereby submitted without defense to the will of her mate. Then the warrior came forward and smote the woman over the head, and

when their union had thus been announced, she became his slave.

She worked for her man and her children. He could beat her and even kill her without punishment. For the one who could have avenged her, usually the brother of the mother, had to accept blood-price if offered.

These traditions horrified Glava. She feared as a day of torture the time when she would be given to Kzahn, the Black Boar, whose odor was fetid. She knew also how harshly Amhao had been treated. She feared that the usages of the Ougmars were similar.

In reality, they were not as rough. Canine teeth were not broken off. Those who wished to be engaged to a maid or a widow had to obtain the mother's consent, or the permission of the mother's brother or his successor.

Glava did not know these things. She liked to be with Helgvor, she admired his stature and even his face, but she could not imagine that this man of an alien breed could be her companion for life. And she wished for no closer tie than that which, vague yet tender, now linked them.

He did not think clearly. He trembled when her eyes, the mingling hues of the river and of dead leaves, rested on him. He quivered when the long hair, which she washed in the stream so often, touched his arm or his shoulder. He appreciated the teeth, as white and strong as those of a wolf-cub, the supple stride, the round neck, but he did not think of the future. Perhaps he was thus calm because there was no other man about, and the madness which blinds stags, felines and birds could not be aroused.

There were hours so sweet that the nomad forgot the menace of the outside world. In the morning, when the waves of light had driven away the

fog, an immense dream, formless, grew with the patience of ferns, trees, flowing steadily as the stream. Then Glava became the life of life, a fearsome mystery which astonished and worried the young man. At times, when he thought that she was of an alien race, he would think that she might be his slave, but when he saw the tawny glow of her eyes, there remained in his flesh but a dazzled humility.

The canoe of the women, that of the Tzohs, larger and faster, had been found. On the sixth day, when Amhao was strong enough, they left the granite inclosure.

CHAPTER X.

THE VENGEANCE TRAIL.

HELGVOR found on the Peninsula a few old men, old women, children, who had escaped the massacre, and also a number of adult women who had fled in time to avoid capture. He waited two days. He had given his hut to the fugitives while a new one was being constructed for him.

Then the warriors returned. They were bringing back many horses for the winter, the hunt had been successful, but their grief was deep and touching.

Akroun, chief of chiefs, still was as strong as a leopard, but years weighed heavily on his shoulders, sprinkled salt in his hair. Craft showed on his rough face, shone in his yellow eyes. Not as tall as Heigoun, the giant of the clan, or even as Helgvor, his shoulders spread like rocks and his torso was hooped with solid ribs.

He called for Helgvor, and spoke in a gruff voice.

"Akroun had left the huts filled with women and children. Five warriors watched over the Red Peninsula. What became of the women; where did the warriors go?"

He knew, for he had met Old Man Hagm far from the camp.

Helgvor replied without visible agitation: "The women were kidnaped, the warriors have died!"

"They fought?" the chief of chiefs swept the young man with a ferocious glance.

"They fought."

"What did Helgvor do? Did he not dare look the foes in the face?"

"It was on the day that Helgvor went scouting, with his dog, his wolf and Hiolg. Helgvor saw the Men of the Rocks and came back. The Tzohs were on the Peninsula: Helgvor was alone."

"Helgvor alone did not fight."

"Helgvor fought. He killed two Tzohs. Later, he killed four others. He wounded two."

The warriors surrounded the young man. Heigoun laughed in derision. The chief's face darkened.

"No warrior witnessed Helgvor's deeds!"

"Hiolg saw all."

"Helgvor killed six Men of the Rocks," a shrill voice piped up, "and Hiolg, with the wolf, killed one." Boldly, the boy came to stand beside the tall warrior.

Then Iouk, brother of Helgvor, and Shtra his father, shouted:

"Helgvor is a warrior!"

"The word of a child weighs no more than a leaf," grumbled Heigoun.

The Ougmars believed Heigoun to be the strongest of men, and when Akroun was not present, he was chief.

"Here are my witnesses," Helgvor said.

From an otter skin he drew seven mummified hands, and Hiolg produced an eighth.

Then Akroun declared: "Helgvor fought."

"Where did that seventh hand come from?" Heigoun asked.

"It is the hand of a Tzoh slain by a fugitive woman from the Rocks, and by the wolf," Helgvor said reluctantly.

Heigoun shouted, shaking a spear aloft: "Helgvor thus has made alliance with a stranger?"

There was hatred between the two men. Heigoun detested the strength of Helgvor, which increased moon by moon. Learning that the younger man had killed six foes, murderous fury whirled in his skull. All stepped aside as the heavy weapon swung high; the red hair of the warrior blazed like a torch; his chest was large as that of a lion, his arms were knotty with muscles, and his legs were stout as small trees.

"Helgvor allied himself with the fugitives," the young man answered, stepping back a pace, holding his club ready. "Thus Helgvor knows where the Men of the Rocks live, and the fugitives shall guide the Ougmars."

"Akroun wants to see those women!" the chief grunted.

"All the warriors want to see them!" Heigoun added.

"It is well."

WHEN the women appeared, an astonished murmur spread among the Ougmars. All eyes turned from the wide face, the slanting eyes and the stocky body of Amhao, to fasten upon Glava.

With her golden hair, her tawny eyes with jade-hued lights, her high, flexible stature, she was comparable with the most beautiful maiden of the

Blue River. Because the women were gone, she appeared more desirable.

"That Tzoh is worthy of entering a warrior's hut," said Heigoun, staring at her avidly, speaking in a masterful voice. As she stood straight and proud, an expression of scorn on her face, the man added: "Heigoun is a chief! The Tzoh woman shall be a chief's woman."

"Is Heigoun the chief of the clan?" Helgvor asked, vehement fury flooding his chest. "And did he make alliance with this maid?"

Akroun listened in silence. The passion for leadership held him entirely, and this quarrel left him indifferent. And if he disliked Heigoun, he feared him because of his strength and his numerous adherents. When Akroun grew old, all expected command to come to Heigoun, the colossal warrior.

"Helgvor is not even a warrior!" rasped Heigoun.

"Helgvor looks Heigoun face to face—and will fight with spear, bow or hatchet."

The spears lifted, and Akroun wished for the defeat and death of his rival. But he feared that Helgvor would be beaten, and he spoke imperiously: "No man of the Blue River shall have a new wife until the Tzohs have been chastised. Until the hour of revenge, the Ougmars will be like jackals or deer. After, the man who shall have fought best shall obtain the woman he desires."

A clamor of applause rose. Many of the warriors were lured by the captive woman, and jealousy already darkened their hearts. The majority, however, wanted to free their women and slay their ravishers. Thus, they all heard Akroun's words with satisfaction, and Shtra said: "The chief has spoken well. The Ougmars shall obey."

"Helgvor defied Heigoun!" the giant howled.

"The tribe needs all the warriors!" Akroun stated harshly. "If Heigoun, Helgvor, or the two of them, were wounded, the Tzohs would be the stronger!"

"Heigoun shall kill Helgvor after victory!"

"Helgvor shall beat down Heigoun!"

As he spoke, the young man stood straight, and his height was almost equal to that of his adversary; but the shoulders of the grown warrior were more massive, his limbs thicker. Startled by the daring of Shtra's son, many warriors admired his courage. Glava, aware that Heigoun was interested in her, was pale with anger and hatred.

THE warriors, who were to start the following day, spent the afternoon repairing or sharpening their weapons. Worry depressed Helgvor, and, dimly, he felt how gentle and easy life had been within the inclosure. If the instinct of race and hatred for the Tzohs had not been strong, he would have thought of escape. Glava was as sad, and when the first stars appeared, she felt the threatening weight of the darkness.

Heigoun was as evil as Kzahm, hostility was aroused in her against the alien breed, and she experienced a certain resentment toward Helgvor for bringing her among these men.

Akroun had called Helgvor to his shelter, to ask:

"The maid will lead us to the land of the Tzohs?"

"Yes," the warrior replied, "if no one menaces her. Glava does not fear death. She fought like a man. And she will bow to none. If the chief wants her for a guide, let Heigoun stay

aside. The maid will talk only to Helgvor."

The chief listened, worried, and at heart he approved Helgvor, but he foresaw trouble. Shaken by circumstances, his authority was swaying; he guessed that many among his people blamed him for carelessness. A few had murmured audibly. Heigoun, daring and eager to dominate, would leave him no respite. Because their natures were antagonistic, and perhaps because Heigoun had shown his greed for power too soon, the chief of chiefs did not wish to have him take leadership.

"How came Helgvor to meet the women and fight the Tzohs?" he asked.

Helgvor related his adventures, the first meeting with the Men of the Rocks, the massacre on the Red Peninsula, the pursuit and the meeting with the fugitives, the fighting on the shore, the combat at the enclosure.

Those many exploits astonished Akroun, for Helgvor was younger than any warrior who hunted the aurochs and horses. Nevertheless, his skill with the bow was well known; since childhood, he had fired arrows and thrown spears with surprising accuracy. His strength increased quicker than his size.

Akroun saw in him a rival for the Giant; should Helgvor become the hero of the tribe, the chief of chiefs would have no rivals. A very young man would never aspire to command. Akroun no longer claimed physical supremacy. Age had drained his muscles of their suppleness and vigor.

At least seven men of the clan were better warriors than he; as he reigned through foresight and craftiness, he was the first to reproach himself for the catastrophe befallen the tribe during his absence. Doubtless it was true that the Men of the Rocks had not raided the Ougmars for two generations and had

been thought to have migrated far to the East. But a chief should never have forgotten their existence!

"The daughter of the Rocks shall walk by day with Helgvor," he decided. "At night she shall be alone, watched by Akroun's dogs, which cannot be approached by any one save the chief."

Deep sorrow gnawed at Helgvor's heart. He did not trust even the chief.

IN the morning, Akroun counted the warriors. There were fifty-eight, all hardened to fatigue and skilled in the use of hatchet, stake, club and spear.

"The Men of the Rocks are much more numerous," Helgvor said. "There are three Tzohs for each Ougmar."

"Formerly, the warriors of the Green Lakes fought with us against them," Akroun said. "But their tribes are now more than a moon's march away."

"We must surprise the Tzohs," Heigoun grumbled.

"The Ougmars shall pass through the forests of the far bank," Akroun said with a somber laugh. "Ten days of marching, along the High River, will bring them to the Land of the Sun. There they shall try to make an alliance with the Gwahs, Men of the Night."

"They are jackals lacking in strength, they eat their dead!" Heigoun retorted harshly.

"The Gwahs are swift afoot and clever at preparing ambushes," Shtra stated. "For six generations they have been the friends of the Ougmars. Shtra has hunted with the Gwahs."

"Gaor also," put in another warrior. "It is a fact that they eat the dead men, but they are faithful to friends, trustworthy."

The Ougmars forded the river in

well built canoes. Although the forest was thick, the ancestors of the clan had many years ago traced a trail through it, a path often taken by mammoths, bison and other animals. Each craft was carried by four men, who were relieved at intervals. This made the march slower, but once the western hills had been crossed, the river would be found, in the high valley, which led southward on a swift current.

The warriors traveled all day, stopping only to eat. The forest seemed endless and it grew on slopes ascending toward the sunset sky. At twilight, behind their fires, the Ougmars were stronger than all animals, even than the mammoths and bison which travel in herds. Only vertical beasts were to be feared, but only the Men of the Night were known to live in the forest, a strange people living in the trunks of old trees.

Glava had been isolated in the center of the camp. The warriors looked toward her often, with fierce yet tender glances. Heigoun roamed as near as he dared, but Akroun had stationed around her Shtra and some men who detested the gigantic warrior, and his alert dogs.

"Akroun didn't know enough to protect the women," Heigoun told his friends. "He's keeping this maid for his friends."

And he turned toward Glava his hairy face, the hue of dying ashes.

Crushed by fear and regret, she was bitterly resentful that she had followed Helgvor to the Red Peninsula. She had been separated from Amhao roughly, and her sister had been left behind with the old men and the survivors. She had resisted at first, then, understanding that this might prove dangerous for Amhao, she had yielded to superior force.

Now, she dreamed of circulating again, with her sister, on the solitary trails. As hateful as the Tzohs, and strangers moreover, the Ougmars, by their gestures, their habits, their weapons, their voices, inspired in the young girl an intense dislike. She would gladly have led Helgvor toward the Land of the Tzohs, but she meant to deceive the others, to take them on false roads.

Helgvor, looking at the maid in the firelight, understood her rancor, and was worried. Several times he had urged the chief to take Amhao on the trip. Heigoun and his friends had opposed this, explaining that the woman would delay the march unless her child was left behind.

"Helgvor will carry the child," the young nomad had said.

"Shtra and Iouk also," his father and brother had added.

Heigoun would not accept this and Akroun gave in, careless of what happened to Amhao. As he would not listen to Helgvor, the young man did not risk suggesting that Glava might avenge herself.

THE next day, the first Men of the Night were encountered. Their faces lengthened like sheep's heads and their pointed ears were tufted with coarse hair. Black as slate, they showed small eyes, like squirrels' pupils, mouths shaped as if eternally sucking, thin limbs and hollow bellies. Their hair grew in islets on their skulls, faces and chests. Their skins oozed an evil-smelling oil, and the thick upper lip lifted to show fang-like teeth. For weapons, they had only sharp stones and pointed sticks.

Shtra had met them in the forest for a score of years. Knowing their tongue, he spoke, with many gestures: "If the Gwahs will come with the

Ougmars, they shall have flesh and blood aplenty."

"Why should the Gwahs go with the Ougmars?" asked the oldest black.

"To help in tracking down the Tzohs. Don't you remember the time when the Tzohs massacred the Men of the Night? The Gwahs shall have the carcasses of the fallen, for the Ougmars are the stronger!"

Despite their craftiness, the Gwahs had credulous souls. To-morrow seemed to them an unlimited time ahead. They sniffed toward the roasting meat, and having been given a share, they ate as they walked beside the River Men. At times, other Gwahs, emerging from hollow trees or from low branches, joined the detachment, lured by the example of the others.

"Flesh will be needed every day," Shtra said to Akroun. "If flesh is lacking, the Gwahs will stop."

Poor hunters, and poor fire-builders, the Gwahs often knew famine.

"They'll have flesh," Akroun assured. "There is much game in the forest." He counted on the Gwahs less to fight the Tzohs openly than to harass them and draw them into ambushes.

After a lapse of several days, there were about fifty Gwahs with the party. Despite their small bodies, they were always ready to eat, equally fitted to starve as to gorge. The Ougmar hunters sought stags, aurochs, boars, all large animals, to satisfy the voracity of their allies.

The Gwahs, inclined to laziness, scattered during the day on all sides of the marching clan, but at night gathered near the fires, inhaling the smells of cooking meat, warming their bodies with much pleasure. Their smells, which resembled those of foxes and skunks, inspired Glava with bitter

disgust, but the warriors, after the first evenings, paid no further attention.

WHEN the High River was reached, it was discovered that there were not enough canoes, and the Gwahs, directed by Ougmars, built rafts. They handled them with more skill than canoes, and did not fear water, for all of them swam like otters. The High River carried them impetuously; in three days, they covered an enormous distance and found themselves near the Blue River.

The stream had overflowed. The water spread in the forest and beat against the lower slopes of the hills. It took six hours to find dry land on the shore. As the plain was broken by great ponds, the canoes and rafts had to be carried along. Akroun hardened his face to maintain his authority in the face of this additional hardship.

"The Ougmars crawl like worms," Heigoun cried late that afternoon. "Never shall they reach the land of the Tzohs."

"The flood must have delayed the kidnapers," Akroun replied harshly. "The Ougmars must pursue." He sent for Helgvor and asked him: "The Tzohs were further than we are upstream when Helgvor met the fugitives?"

"No, the Tzohs were two or three days' travel downstream from here."

"The Tzohs must have gone overland," Heigoun suggested. "We must leave the river bank."

"Not yet!" Akroun snapped. He stared at Heigoun. "Does Heigoun forget we are on the warpath?"

"Heigoun obeys the chief! But warriors have the right to group and confer."

Akroun grew ashen pale. There was

no talk of gathering the warriors for a conference unless the authority of the chief was questioned.

"Akroun will call the warriors together when the fires are lighted."

"If the Tzohs are near by, they shall see the fires."

"Is Heigoun a child? Does he believe that the chief does not know fires must be screened?"

That night Akroun selected a depression rimmed with trees for the camping place. In any case the scouts, Ougmars and Gwahs, had discovered no tracks up to a distance from which the fires, even on the flat plain, would have been invisible. When the wood burned brightly, Akroun summoned the men.

"Let the warriors gather. The chief will listen to them."

Heigoun's supporters came first. There were twelve of them, no one of whom had seen over thirty autumns. Those who remained loyal to the chief, whether by trust, by fear or hatred of Heigoun, arrived more slowly. There were fifteen, among them Shtra, Iouk and Helgvor. The rest, undecided, ready to side with the stronger group, hovered behind.

Akroun, watching his rival's friends with anxiety, remembered with bitterness the days, not so far in the past, when the tribe had followed him blindly. Then, Heigoun had waited for the time to ripen. Now, the chief sensed distrust in the depths of his men's souls, knew that he was reproached with the loss of the women. He rose, and the fires cast red reflections in the amber eyes. His mighty face simulated confidence. And he spoke.

"The chief has gathered the warriors to consult their wisdom. The road alongside the river is flooded. But it is the shortest route. Must we follow

it, or strike across land? Let the warriors think it over!"

HEIGOUN lurched to his feet, bulky, formidable. His shoulders oscillated slowly, his powerful jaws were contracted, and when he opened his mouth he showed white fangs.

"The experience of the chief is great and the warriors shall obey his orders. But if the river road is the shorter, it will take longer to follow. The Tzohs will not have followed it. The Tzohs have gone inland."

His enormous hand indicated the West, while his companions exclaimed approvingly. "Hunting is difficult near the shore! To-night, the Gwahs will not get enough flesh, and the Gwahs are with the Ougmars only to eat. Do the Ougmars wish the Gwahs to go away? Then they shall not be numerous enough to attack the Tzohs!"

His backers agreed by words and gestures. The undecided looked on timidly, ready to fall in with the new power. When Akroun rose to answer, his chest was seen to quiver.

"Heigoun is a clever warrior! But what does he know of the enemy? What do the Ougmars know? The tracks have not been picked up. We must seek their trail. Here is what Akroun wishes. Seven warriors, with Gwahs and dogs, will scout along the river. All will bring back the flesh of animals they hunt. Thus will the Ougmars know the right way. The chief has spoken. The warriors shall obey."

Then the timid men who had waited for a decision again trusted the chief, while Heigoun's supporters were silent and still. Understanding that the occasion was not arrived, the Son of the Wolf said:

"Heigoun can command scouts to march overland?"

The chief agreed. But a suspicion stirred the giant; he looked at Helgvor, he looked toward Glava. Akroun understood, and, being careful not to nurture a quarrel before the Tzohs had been beaten, he intervened.

"Shtra shall command the men who will follow the river—and Helgvor will be the guide."

Helgvor looked at Glava with despair. A deep rancor rose in his heart.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

Helgvor of the Blue River

By J. H. ROSNY AINÉ with GEORGES SURDEZ



Helgvor leaped aside as the aurochs charged

Primeval beasts and the primitive passions of his sworn enemy threatened Helgvor, the young warrior, as he followed the trail of vengeance

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

WHEN men fought with clubs and spears, and mammoths and saber-toothed tigers roamed the earth, there lived on the Red Peninsula, near the Blue River, a young warrior of the Ougmar clan, Helgvor.

He it was who was on guard when a raiding war party of flat-headed Tzohs sacked the Ougmar camp, killed the old people and children, and carried off the women during the absence of Helgvor's fellow warriors.

Accompanied by his wolf and two dogs, and the boy Hiolg, Helgvor sets out to track the marauding Tzohs to their own encampment. Following them at a safe distance, he sees the pursuit by Tzoh warriors of two Tzoh women, Amhao and her sister Glava. With Glava as leader, they had fled from the Tzohs when Amhao was ordained a human sacrifice to the angry god of the Mountain.

About to be captured by their pursuers, the two women are startled at

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the sudden appearance of Helgvor, who aids them. At night, in a rocky inclosure where they fortify themselves, they are set upon by half a dozen Tzoh warriors.

Helgvor, aided by the boy and the two women, beats off the attackers, slays them all. Morning finds the defenders wounded but alive—and shows Helgvor that Glava, who has fought with a man's courage and skill, resembles his own fair-haired, straight limbed tribe.

They return to the Ougmar country, meet Helgvor's returned fellow warriors, and again take up the trail of vengeance. Glava accompanies them as guide. Strife is threatened, however, when Heigoun, strongest of the Ougmar warriors, lays claim to Glava.

Helgvor defies him, but Akroun, the chief, will not permit them to fight until the Tzohs have been overtaken and punished. To appease Heigoun, he sends him off at the head of a scouting party, and sends Helgvor in another party, headed by Shtra, Helgvor's father.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ENEMY!

AT dawn, Heigoun started out inland with six warriors, a few Gwahs and dogs. Shtra, with Helgvor, left for the river, his troop bearing two canoes to ford the ponds. When the sheets of water were narrow they circled them or at times waded across.

Gloomy thoughts depressed Helgvor: the image of Glava tormented his youth, and because he was incapable of analyzing his mind, that image dominated his acts and his impulses. Formerly, the defeat of the Tzohs would

have absorbed his whole being. Now he thought much more of winning Glava.

Shtra loved Helgvor. He was a warrior with peaceful ways, humble before the chief, and he detested Heigoun. With much experience and little intuition, without ambition to command, he loved his ease. On the trail, at war and during the hunt, he performed his duties without ardor. He killed animals calmly, he was ready to exterminate the Tzohs. In like fashion, he would have liked to deprive Heigoun and his friends of their lives, preferably by some trick, had Akroun so ordered. Death did not perturb him, neither did the sufferings of those toward whom he was indifferent, but he would have mourned for Iouk or Helgvor many days.

Iouk, brother of Helgvor, resembled Shtra. More alert, he hated strongly. Although born before Helgvor, he acknowledged without anger or envy the superior strength and skill of his brother; he even was proud of him. For he was of those men for whom others may seem happy parts of their own beings.

For the first hours the little expedition progressed slowly. The six dogs, the wolf, the Gwahs and the warriors sought in vain for tracks. When the sun had crossed the first quarter of the sky, Shtra said:

"If the Tzohs passed here before the flood, they must be very far ahead."

"Is not the flood wider upstream?" Helgvor asked.

Shtra shrugged. His narrow face resumed its apathetic gentleness. They had crossed a submerged ravine, had circled rocks, and walked on dry soil. The Gwahs searched casually, for they were hungry and wished to rest. A halt was ordered.

Then Helgvor explored the plain, and to see better, climbed on a bowlder. Furtive animals appeared in a flash, vanished. He saw a deer, horses, a triangular flight of cranes under a cloud. The dogs and the Ougmars also searched. At last the eyes of Helgvor lighted. A herd of aurochs had appeared in a ravine.

He slipped through the thickets, crawled in the tall grass, and came within arrow range of the herd. The aurochs had stopped in the ravine, where grew fresh grass.

Two enormous bulls protected the herd, and perhaps after an unsatisfactory combat, kept far from one another. Tawny hair grew on their shoulders and straggled over their eyes. Their limbs were slender for their tremendous bodies, which tapered from their broad, shaggy chests to slim hind-quarters. They gave an impression of immense strength united with extreme agility. Their horns spread wide, very sharp, horns strong enough to toss aside lion, tiger or gray bear.

The herd grazed quietly. At intervals, one of the bulls would lift his monstrous head and seem to catch on his sensitive nostrils the emanations in the atmosphere, to catch within the radiance of his big, dark eyes the reflection of his surroundings.

Helgvor crept nearer, bent his bow.

ONE of the bulls bellowed; the cows lifted their melancholy heads as the dread effluvia of man drifted through the air. Several knew the smell, and one of the bulls, who had seen before the erect beast on his horizon, gave the signal for retreat.

An arrow struck him in the chest, a keen point stabbed for his heart. Furious, he charged for the center of the smell, while the herd fled.

Helgvor stood up. Filled with admiration for the colossal beast, aware that he was protecting the herd, he felt a dim regret. But the Ougmars, the Gwahs, the animals, waited for the flesh that creates flesh. A second arrow dug into the chest, then Helgvor drew a spear from his belt. The wounded aurochs had lost all sense of preservation, thought only of crushing his attacker, longed to gore him with his horns. He came on like a bowlder rolled in an avalanche.

Helgvor threw his spear. It penetrated near the shoulder. From rage and pain, the aurochs roared like a lion. When the gigantic beast was but a stride away, Helgvor leaped nimbly aside, and his club swung down. It struck on the skull, bounced off, fell back and broke the bull's foreleg. From then on the man was the master. Clumsy, almost helpless, the beast tried several attacks, which the hunter easily avoided.

"The warriors and the dogs need the flesh of the great aurochs!" he said.

He expressed thus, without being aware of it, his admiration for the immense beast, and his sorrow to slay it. For the bull was dying. His large eyes were foggy. He no longer attacked, but waited motionless, in the dream of death, on the mysterious brink of Nothingness. Then he trembled, a raucous plaint rose from his deep throat and suddenly he tumbled into the grass, dead.

Helgvor called the Gwahs and the Ougmars. All were coming near, their eyes avidly fastened on the enormous prey. The Gwahs grinned their silent, primitive grimace of a laugh, almost like that of the dogs.

"There!" Helgvor announced, "there is much flesh now."

"Helgvor is a great hunter!" Shtra said, while Iouk made a fire.

But Helgvor paid no heed to his praise. He had seen, not far away, a wide, dark spot in the grass, and joy dilated his breast. The Tzohs had camped there. The ashes still seemed fresh. Bones were strewn about, with rags of fur. Helgvor called his wolf and his dog, made them smell the encampment.

Behind, the Gwahs were watching Iouk striking flint. Their eyes gleamed like those of jackals. Shtra was laughing softly.

"The Gwahs have forgotten famine. They will follow the warriors like dogs."

Helgvor announced: "The tracks of the Tzohs are found. They camped in this ravine last night."

The Ougmars were skinning the aurochs, and already large quarterings of meat emanated the heady aroma of cooking food.

If Helgvor thought of the Tzohs, who had to be exterminated, he thought even more of Glava; he could imagine her, somber and angry, near the fires; her breast would dilate as if to lift space, while her heart was heavy as a block of granite. And he intensely hated Heigoun with the hairy chest.

THE dog and the wolf followed the tracks.

To avoid confusion, other animals were held behind. Because of the numbers of the Tzohs and their captives, their trail was easily followed for a long time. Across pools, plains and hills the scouts progressed for two-thirds of one day. A tributary river was reached, which rolled muddy waters rapidly. And on the far side of that stream the tracks had vanished.

As the Tzohs could not have gone

upstream—the river was swift as a torrent—the scouts must seek downstream. In any case it was easier in that direction, for the ground was high and dry. The tracks of the Tzohs were found.

Then a blood-stained spear left behind announced that the Tzohs had passed here recently. Shtra, Iouk and Helgvor examined the weapon carefully.

"The Tzohs are near," Shtra concluded. "The blood is not yet black." He shook his head anxiously. "Did not Helgvor see one hundred warriors before meeting the fugitives?"

"They were more than one hundred when they attacked the Red Peninsula, and more than one hundred also when Helgvor counted them on the plain."

"Then Shtra shall take care not to start a fight with them, having only a few warriors and the Gwahs."

"That fire of which Shtra saw the ashes was not a fire for one hundred warriors!"

"Perhaps they didn't have enough dry wood!"

"Helgvor thinks the pursuit must be kept up."

"So does Iouk!"

"Let's follow the tracks," Shtra said with resignation. They walked for two hours, then the trail was evidently so recent that all were aware the Tzohs were very near. All doubts were removed when the distinct imprints of feet were discerned on moist soil. Some were so clear that Shtra commented: "Here passed the heavy feet of the Tzohs, and here the light feet of the women." A sudden rage swept this pacific man and his fists knotted.

Helgvor, trying to read the tracks, followed them for some hundreds of yards, then retraced his steps. "The

Tzohs are not more numerous than the fingers of three hands!"

"The Gwahs and the Ougmars united are less numerous than the Tzohs! The Gwahs are weak and poorly armed."

"Helgvor's wolf will fight, and the dogs will harass the foes."

Shtra was silent, uncertain as to what should be done.

"Our arrows carry further than those of the Tzohs," the young man argued. "Their warriors aim badly. The men on our side who cannot shoot well can turn over their arrows to Helgvor."

"Yes, Helgvor has the eye of the hawk," Shtra agreed.

"Helgvor shall go first. He shall kill some Tzohs and lure the others into pursuit. Shtra and the warriors will lie in ambush."

While Shtra still hesitated, Iouk intervened. "Our women are with them!" he growled, and his eyes flashed.

"Let Helgvor guide us, then," Shtra said, filled with fury, speaking in a vehement voice. "When we get near the Tzohs, we shall ambush them."

The little troop started again, preceded by Helgvor and Iouk. The tracks vanished, reappeared. A long hill, low and green, barred the horizon. They climbed the slopes slowly. On the crest they came upon a circular clearing studded with bowlders and thick with bushes.

"Let Shtra await his son here," Helgvor said. "The Tzohs are down below."

HE progressed alone, cautiously. A narrow granite plateau crowned the hill's crest. Coarse grass grew there, broken by small trees, bushes, and low stone masses. Since a

moment ago, the dog showed an agitation which the wolf soon shared. They crept between the bowlders with care.

A low whistle checked them. Helgvor had reached the rim of the plateau. Crouched on the ground, he crept, and his quicker breath revealed his emotion.

At the bottom of the hill, stopped by the flood, the Tzohs were lighting their fires. The captive women, squatted, huddled, were obviously exhausted. Perhaps thirty warriors were there on the nude soil, and although the majority seemed as worn out as the females, almost all were young men, fitted for combat. Before those thick torsos, those mighty shoulders, the Gwahs would be as children. Only the strongest Ougmars might cope with them.

Nevertheless, Helgvor saw that the encampment, protected from direct attack, could be flanked and riddled with arrows. He cast a glance at the big bow suspended from his shoulder. He had five arrows, all tipped with nephrite stone points, and he knew that he could shoot them from a distance beyond the range of the Tzohs' puny bows.

His chest swelling with the fighting excitement of war, he went back to the crest of the hill. He addressed Shtra: "If Helgvor has many arrows, he will drop a good many Tzohs. The others can be wiped out by the warriors and the Gwahs."

He described the position occupied by the enemy.

"Shtra wants to look," the chief said.

He requisitioned a dozen arrows for Helgvor. The two warriors climbed to the crest and Shtra, having counted the Tzohs, yielded gloomily to the prestige of his tall son.

"Shtra and his warriors will wait among the bowlders."

He went back to camp and Helgvor descended the far slope of the hill, very slowly, having ordered the dog and the wolf to wait for him, a command which they understood as well as men might have. Helgvor felt this would be a great day in his life; his heart was beating hard and a great lucidity reigned in his brain.

But the nearer he approached the more daring the adventure became. The faces and bodies of the Tzohs appeared to be more alive; he discerned clearly their broad, swarthy faces, the granite-like jaws, the jackals' pupils. If they surrounded him his death was near, and he sensed this fully as he advanced upon them.

Although he thought himself quicker than they, doubts assailed him like treacherous beasts. Among so many young warriors perhaps a few would possess, as he did, the speed of the stag and the spring of the leopard. Even a slight wound in the leg would cause his death, by placing Helgvor at his enemies' mercy. Skilled in the use of trees and grass to screen himself, he had arrived within two arrows' flight. The soil was bare, covered with silvery moss, save on the bowlders, where the growth was reddish and green.

Another step, and Helgvor would be visible.

For a moment his heart pounded so fast that his strength seemed puny before these gathered forces; the love of life stirred in him like the leaves of the sycamore in the breeze. Thinking of Glava, he faltered. Her glowing eyes and tawny hair appeared all the joy in the world. It was brief; the day was come when victory would make him a warrior feared by all. If he drew back now Glava would scorn

him, and he would not dare reappear among his people.

CHAPTER XII.

LONE ATTACK.

ATZOH saw him, another, and in succession the cubical heads lifted. Their stupefaction was so intense that they were silent at first. They stared at this lone warrior and sought for his companions. There were none. And the man was coming on, in long strides, charging upon the camp alone.

Then some of the Tzohs identified him. He was the very man who had rescued the fugitive women. Kamr had gone after him with five men, and none had come back. Trusting in their numbers and accustomed to battle, they rose and uttered the challenging death yelp.

"Helgvor killed two Tzohs, then four of those in the big canoe," the nomad shouted. "Helgvor killed the chieftain with the wide shoulders. All the ravishers shall perish!"

The women, mute and filled with terror, with hope, listened to this ringing voice. Their youth, memories of the Red Peninsula flooded them with quivering joy.

Helgvor ran nearer. He was within range soon, stretched his bow. The arrow scarcely grazed the shoulder of a warrior and the Tzohs howled with rage. Two other missiles reached their targets. One pierced the breast of a warrior, the other sank into his belly.

The Tzohs returned his fire, but their bows did not carry far, the few arrows which reached the nomad were spent, powerless. Three more times the great bow hummed, and two enemies received deep wounds.

Enraged, the Tzohs started for the lone man. He retreated, and while retreating wounded two other men. The others rushed madly, save for six, staying to watch the captive women. Helgvor had but three arrows left. He saved them for the supreme struggle and took flight, which scattered the pursuers. Three, faster afoot than were the others, had gained a long lead by the time the Ougmar reached the crest. They were young men, at the age when legs are very speedy but arms weak. They were together, armed with bronze hatchets and spears.

Suddenly they saw Helgvor no more. Fearing ambush, they slackened speed. A rustling caused them to turn. The Ougmar had risen behind them, between two boulders, a spear poised; the sharp weapon hurtled through the air, and the nearest Tzoh fell. The others launched their spears. One of them wounded Helgvor in the head, but rushing forward he swung his club, smashed the skull of one of the young warriors, while the point of a spear darted from the left hand, piercing the throat of the other.

The attack had been so swift that none of the other pursuers was within arrow range when Helgvor resumed his flight and scrambled down the slope. He shouted, in a voice which resounded in the camp of his comrades:

"Helgvor wounded nine Tzohs. Let the warriors be ready for combat!"

Within a few moments his strides seemed to falter. He lifted his hand to his head, from which blood flowed, and looked at that hand, reddened with blood. He gestured then, to make his injury obvious to the Men of the Rocks. Then, pretending to weaken, he stumbled. Sure that he was dropping, the most eager dared to leave the group of runners.

"Let our warriors attack!" he screamed.

He whirled when very near the ambush, and with the quick spring of a leopard he was on the nearest Tzoh, knocked him down. Another, coming on in great leaps, stopped too late. The enormous club smote across his loins, fractured his spine.

At the same moment, arrows, stones, spears spouted from the refuge of the Ougmars and the Gwahs. The dogs barked, the men bellowed like aurochs and wolves; six tall warriors emerged, then others, blacks with pointed ears, sliding through grass as rapidly as the barking dogs.

IT was a panic—the Tzohs believed themselves facing the whole clan, and the majority, filled with terror, scattered at random. But six or seven faced the unexpected foes. They slew two Gwahs and one Ougmar, but great clubs broke their bones, knocked out their bowels from ripped bellies. When they had been exterminated, the Men of the River and their beasts took up the chase. Those who were caught made no resistance. The pointed stakes of the Gwahs, the clubs, the hatchets, the spears of the Ougmars cut off their defenseless lives.

More agile than were the short-legged Tzohs, the victors had wiped out almost all the vanquished when they reached the camp and the women. Their guards, mediocre fighters, had fled. Those that were overhauled allowed themselves to be slain without a fight.

The day was about to end. The red sun, half-buried in clouds, already slid down toward the river. Almost all the Tzohs had died.

Shtra, filled with admiration and enthusiasm, cried out:

"Helgvor, Son of Shtra, is a mighty warrior—strong as the mammoth, swift as the tiger—Heigoun is only a wolf!"

The Ougmar warriors repeated.

"Helgvor, Son of Shtra, is a mighty warrior!"

The women, overjoyed at their rescue, clamored with the men. They had seen Helgvor's first exploits.

And the clouds were twisted into mirages like all the mirages that had filled the clouds through æons and æons. It was a brilliant evening upon the perishable Earth; a soft breeze ran across the waters; and when the fires were lighted, the joy of life filled those who had suppressed life.

Helgvor felt the pride of being a dreaded warrior, but his pride was laid before a remote fire, before a supple shape, and his heart quivered with sweet yet terrible anguish.

CHAPTER XIII.

GLAVA IN THE NIGHT.

WHEN Helgvor vanished beyond the hills, horror swooped upon Glava. Haggard, she stared at these unknown beings about her, found the sight of them less and less bearable.

Akroun had given strict orders that no one should go near the foreign woman. She was in the middle of the encampment. Men's glances went toward her, irritating. Because she was alone, the peril was not great and Akroun's protection surer. For almost all these warriors had lost their women, and were rivals.

The day passed dully, without incidents. A heavy boredom crushed the men and many fell asleep. Akroun scanned the horizon, or dispatched

small parties of warriors as scouts, instructing them not to go beyond the hills. These would soon return, without anything to report.

The camp was guarded by six sentries, stationed at regular intervals and changed often. No surprise could be feared. The chief remained gloomy. The Ougmars' distrust weighed on his mind, for he knew it would increase at the least failure. Then he would lose authority and would be put to death, for Heigoun would not tolerate a living rival.

The image of Heigoun oppressed Akroun as if the warrior had been near, with his cave bear's chest, his ferocious eyes and his enormous shoulders. He also thought of Helgvor, whom he admired grudgingly for his exploits, his skill and his vigor. Much too young to become a chief, Helgvor, no matter what happened, would not prove dangerous. In any event if he, Akroun, made good and recaptured the women taken by the Tzohs, he would be pitiless to his foes. But would he recapture them? The Tzohs were too numerous and his allies too weak! Dull doubt gnawed the chief's brain.

Night came.

Neither Shtra nor Heigoun had come back, and the sentries on the hills signaled nothing. Perhaps the scouts had been surprised by their foes and killed off. Then, all struggle rendered impossible, the Ougmars would return to their homes beaten, to live without women, without sons, and their race would die.

Glava also thought—bitter, harsh thoughts. Her youth was weary as old age; her anxiety was increasing. A few stars appeared, gleaming a while to be extinguished by a light downpour, which turned into a torrential rain.

The rivers filled space. Water rose

in the pools. Wild beasts sought their dens. Owls hooted mournfully and the jackals complained.

One by one the fires went out, and the night spread thick as velvet. Here and there men still stirred, but the water soaked through their furs, moistened hair and beards, seeped into ears and nostrils, extinguishing their lust as it had put out the fires.

Nevertheless, their snores annoyed Glava. Unable to bear the sounds longer, she crept away in the darkness. No definite plan was in her mind. She fled like a doe pursued by the wolf, like the stag pursued by the tiger.

SHE crept a long time with animal prudence, noiselessly circling the prone bodies. Dogs awoke with short growls, then they identified Glava, whose scent was familiar, and dropped back into their shivering torpor.

Then she was alone and crawling quicker; she soon left the camp behind. There were no more rough sounds, no odors save those of the moist sod, the grass and the trees. Weary, she remained motionless an instant to gather her scattered thoughts. She ardently wished to join Amhao. She also would have desired to see Helgvor. She loved him more than she herself knew, with a love similar to that she granted her sister.

But Helgvor was away, sent off purposely to leave her defenseless. She could not understand why he had gone, although she knew that he could not disobey a chief. The terrifying silhouette of Heigoun lifted in her mind. Why had not Helgvor come back? Death was all about—

She started forward again. Like an unchecked torrent the rain fell and its sounds muffled all other noises. Even

the jackals were quiet. Glava was chilled to the bones, her limbs tired.

Then there was no time and no space, all melted into the dark, watery night. The water rose to the fugitive's chest, she did not know where to step. Everywhere her hands encountered the cold fluid which penetrated and submerged everything.

She struck a hard object, which moved. Glava identified a canoe. She held onto it, drew the craft near, and succeeded in climbing into the hull. There were paddles, which she handled at random. Then she felt the gentle, soft slide as she was borne away, faster and faster.

Dawn came at last, a smear of ashy white in the depth of the sky. Light increased, and the world was dripping with happiness. Far off, Glava discerned vegetation and rocks, and as the current shot the canoe along rapidly she knew that she was on the river. With this knowledge hope was reborn. She thought of rejoining Amhao on the Red Peninsula.

Despite her weariness she paddled long, to increase the distance between herself and the Ougmars. When she was tired she inspected her boat. There was only a pointed stake for a weapon and a sharp-edged stone for a tool. The point of the stake was worn dull, and could be employed only against weak beasts. For a long time she suffered from cold, then the rising sun warmed her chilled limbs, which resumed the suppleness and the spring of youth.

"Glava shall see Amhao!" she said.

Then the canoe slid slowly on the immense surface. Glava had gone near the left bank, to be sheltered from sight. She was hungry, and she found a haven in which to land. It was a gently sloping stone platform in a rocky cliff, at the end of which was a

small cave. Glava, having made sure that no wild beast lived therein, dragged the canoe into a seam of the stone and fastened it with leather ropes left in the craft by the Ougmars.

The cave connected with the top of the cliff, through cracks. Glava picked up the stake, to hunt game and defend herself. By a corridor of basaltic rock she reached soil that the waters could not reach; a narrow plain fringed the thick forest which had spread over the universe long before the birth of the Gwahs, Sons of the Night.

GLAVA was afraid, less of the beasts than of the forest and of the unnamed things which menace living creatures. When she had fled with Amhao, the presence of her sister and the child had populated the world. Now, she was wholly alone, to face the immensity of the river and of the forest, and hostile life.

She hesitated before plunging into the jungle, but nothing appeared on the plain save a few animals which remained too far away to be caught. In the forest Glava found white mushrooms such as were eaten by the Tzohs. Raw, they smelled like mouldy wood, but she ate two to appease her intense hunger, before disgust overcame famine.

Two squirrels appeared on the lower branches of a sycamore tree. Invisible behind a young tree, she spied upon the small beasts, covered with gray fur, with brushy ears and extraordinarily hairy tails longer than their bodies. Their rats' eyes glittered and each of their movements was graceful. With a bow, or even with a spear, she could have killed one of them, but the clumsy stake would surely miss the target.

They gnawed peacefully and did not see, in the thick foliage, death nearing

them. A lynx was there, strange feline with triangular ears, hair sprouting on each side of the jaws like a beard, and a spotted pelt. He was as silent as the night. They saw him suddenly, leaped. But the quick beast fell on them like a projectile, broke their backs with two strokes of his paws. They dropped to the ground and the lynx slid down the tree to get at them.

Rage at seeing his legitimate prey claimed by another vibrated through the slim body, and the lynx lifted a paw warningly. Glava held the point of the stake toward him. The animal measured the height and mass of the girl with a glance, and recalled Gwahs encountered in his native forest. They were beings such as this one, more dangerous than wolves, equipped with queer claws that they shot far from their bodies. A lynx should yield to them. But this was the first time one of the erect beings had seized a prey from a lynx.

"Glava is stronger than the lynx!" the young girl shouted, knowing that animals must be menaced. The lynx growled, and she tossed the stake at him. Then, furious but resigned, the beast leaped away, vanished into the undergrowth. One of the squirrels was dying, the other dead. Glava, with their flesh, could face the unknown forces which destroy human beings. Laden with the small, tawny bodies, she went back to the canoe.

One of the squirrels contributed his mysterious energy to her body without driving off the need for sleep. She sought a shelter, found none. Wild animals could come down to the river bank. She could not sleep in the canoe; tiger or lion would have reached her in one leap. And the craft was too heavy for her to turn over, as she had done on occasions while with Amhao.

An island would be the best refuge, but the flood had submerged the low ones, and of the larger, only the crests emerged. Glava would have preferred a small, easily explored islet, on which she could be sure no felines lived.

THE canoe had started again, and now slid swiftly, bearing away the weak human beast.

After a long time, Glava espied two islands of different sizes. The largest was prolonged by long, slender headlands, at the tips of a thickly overgrown plateau. The sight of many large crocodiles and snakes which the flood had driven to the center of this island kept her from attempting a landing. The second island, smaller and very rocky, appeared more hospitable; the trees were few and the low grass revealed no suspicious presence.

Two boulders left between them a slit too narrow to give passage to tiger, lion or gray bear, which, in any case, would have had to come from one of the banks, something that Glava deemed impossible. To avoid risk, she further barred the way with twisted branches and lianas, and having moored the canoe, fell asleep.

The sun was already low on the horizon when she awoke. Its yellow radiance flushed the right bank, and a deep, luminous peace reigned over the waters. An old hippopotamus, hideous and peaceful, slumbered at the tip of the island. A bird twittered, perched on a quivering bough.

Toward morning, a slight noise awakened her, and in the light of the stars she saw a head gnawing the small bones of the squirrel. It was a diminutive animal, the size of a young fox, with pointed ears and eyes that glowed like fireflies.

The immensity of the sky was still sprinkled with luminous flowers. In their weak glow, Glava identified a jackal. He did not appear to have attained his full growth, and his presence on the islet was astonishing. Doubtless he had been brought here by the flood, shaken on the rushing water and thrown upon this deserted rock. Was he alone?

She did not drive away the jackal but listened to the little sounds made by the teeth on the bones. Glava, no longer sleepy, stood slowly. The baby jackal fled, and she already regretted moving when she saw it returning, furtively, eyes on the heap of branches hiding the unknown beast.

It started gnawing the bones again, then, having discovered the pelt, it chewed it. Its presence became pleasing. Itself, at an age when distrust did not yet have roots in the depths of instinct and experience, grew accustomed to Glava's scent. Prompt to terror, it was also prompt to familiarity, once certain no harm would befall it.

The little stars vanished, the larger ones dimmed. And beyond the right bank, where the Ougmars pursued the Tzohs, light rose so slowly that it seemed it never would reach the bank. The forest was lighted in turn, and an enormous sun spilled its motionless flames in the clouds. The sky became a limitless world.

The jackal uttered a little, plaintive cry. Ceaselessly it fled, ceaselessly it came back. It was very graceful, with its brownish pelt, paler on the chest, its fine, mobile ears, its delicate paws. All its movements had the awkward ease of a still-growing animal. And, looking at him, obscure tenderness swept the young Tzoh girl.

Meanwhile, hunger had come again,

and the islet produced no plant suitable to feed man. The Tzohs knew how to fish with a harpoon, even with bare hands. Motionless, Glava stared a long time at the perch, the trout and the pike which swam in the stream. But it was a tortoise which brought its strength. It had climbed upon a flat rock, and its snake-like head was over the stream, seeking prey, when it became prey. The head withdrew into the shell, and Glava seemed to hold nothing but a colorful stone.

She made a fire and cooked the tortoise. The jackal roamed about, constantly driven away by fear, brought back by hunger and hope. When it received the organs of the tortoise, it dropped all distrust. It joined Glava as it would have joined its breed. It rubbed against her legs, did not dread the touch of her hand, but when Glava took it into the canoe and it saw itself floating on the river, fever flared in its pupils.

Then the canoe itself became familiar, and, in the infinite chances of life and death, the jackal followed the fate of the woman.

CHAPTER XIV.

MEN OF THE NIGHT.

A FEW days elapsed. As long as light endured, Glava sailed on the river, upon which, despite whirlpools and rapids, she felt more secure than on land. Each evening she was nearer to Amhao, and her impatience waxed like the crescent of the moon. Between her and the young jackal, alliance was complete. The young animal attached itself the more as it realized its weakness and the imperfection of its instinct.

In the vast solitude the little beast

became very dear to the fugitive. It showed quick intelligence and already its subtle senses helped Glava in tracking down animals and discovering prey. By living with a human being, the jackal understood all that an animal may learn from man, and Glava, with her intuition of her companion's reactions, wondered how much it could make plain, by its actions, its caresses and its glance.

It appeared scarcely less intelligent than certain human brutes, such as the Son of the Sheep, a clumsy, loutish warrior, whose eyes remained still as those of a crocodile, while the eyes of the little jackal were alert and full of willingness to serve.

One night, when the fire had gone out, the jackal scratched her shoulder, and the girl, awakening with a start, sat up to see two tall black wolves creeping toward her. Had she been surprised asleep she would have succumbed to their fangs. She uttered a harsh cry and cast her stake, the point of which she had mended and hardened in fire. Moreover, Glava now had a club hewn from a locust-wood branch, and a provision of sharp stones. The wolves, seeing the vertical beast rise, startled by the shout, stood still.

The half-moon revealed their necks and their keen fangs; they were wolves of the big breed, able to strangle a man, to fight a panther. But even hunger had not killed their prudence. The young jackal had taken shelter behind the woman, although it knew, by instinct inherited from generations, that it was not a good prey for these huge animals which resembled it somewhat.

"Men are mightier than wolves," Glava threatened them. "Glava will pierce their bellies with this stake, crush their bones with this club!"

The wolves listened attentively. The

human voice was not unknown to them, for they had heard, rarely, the voices of the Gwahs. But the Gwahs spoke little, confined their speech to war howls. Higher pitched and changing in tone, Glava's voice awoke distrust, without, however, persuading them to avoid combat. Their entrails, ablaze with hunger, gave them courage.

"Let the wolves hunt the stag, the doe or the antelope!" the woman resumed.

The stronger wolf, excited by her scent, breathed hard and bared his teeth. All his flesh sensed the joy of a meal. It needed but one leap, teeth dug into an artery of the throat, and the prey would appease the call of his belly.

Filled with fury against the beast which kept food from him, the wolf howled. Glava tossed a sharp stone at him, not too hard, for the rage of wounded beasts was to be feared. The less bold of the wolves, struck on the head, uttered a cry of mingled pain and terror, retreated, while the other understood that this prey might be dangerous.

NEVERTHELESS, he started an attack, and Glava hit him with another stone, on the flank. He retreated also. Though he knew the sound of human voices, he had not known that men could hit at a distance, for the Gwahs had never hunted him. Taking refuge behind a boulder, disconcerted by this bizarre prey, he showed less ardor. Had it not been for the scent quickening his hunger, he would have run off, but a foggy lust held him.

The moon vanished. The girl still saw the eyes of the wolves, like four green stars. But they did not attack, and doubtless would attack only if they

believed her asleep. To keep them in hesitation, she cried out, spoke. Sometimes, also, to spare her sharp stones, she picked up large pebbles which she threw at random.

The night was fearfully long. Often the wolves started forward, and toward dawn they came within three arms' lengths. Two more sharp stones, perhaps the smell of another prey, decided them to retreat at last. They were lost to sight in the morning's haze.

A new morning dawned on the river, the forests and the plains, a morn heavy with fog. The girl shivered. Having ascertained that the way was clear she went to the canoe. She was hastening to leave this evil spot, to find herself on the waters again, rid of sinister animals.

Then fear flooded her arteries; the canoe had vanished.

There remained only fragments of the leather ropes, gnawed away by wild beasts. On the surface of the river there was nothing save scum, leaves and twigs carried by the current. A measureless sadness filled the girl. She wept bitterly, squatted on the shore. As on the night when she had fled from the Ougmars' camp, she conceived the horror of solitude, felt weaker than the little jackal moaning its hunger at her side.

The breeze swept the sky clear of fog. The sun revealed limitless space, and Glava, frightened by the distance separating her from Amhao, despaired of the morrow. She still had some cooked meat, left from her evening meal. She gave a part to the jackal, ate the rest. But while the world became happy again for the satiated animal, it remained somber as agony to the daughter of the Rocks.

Nevertheless, she started forth. Between the shore and the forest spread a

plain on which walking was easy, but while she had been fearless on the river, here peril might lurk anywhere. Although he hated daylight, the jackal trusted in her, and trotted contentedly.

Rounding a boulder, the fugitive stopped short and trembled throughout her body; the lordly beasts had come!

There were five of them, black as slate, with their horsy faces, their hairy, pointed ears, their slender limbs and hollow stomachs. She recognized them as Gwahs, allies of the Ougmars, ferocious as hyenas, men who ate the flesh of human beings. Armed with stakes and stones, they were completely naked. She remained as if petrified, her eyes on those fearsome, repulsive creatures.

They soon espied the maid. Despite the throbbing of her heart, she kept the half-calm of the grass-eaters before the carnivorous beasts, which ends only after they have been caught. The line of rocks, steep and without clefts, offered no shelter; the plain was open to the forest. She must retreat to the bushes.

But the Gwahs were but five hundred arms' lengths away, arriving rapidly. Brief though it was, Glava's hesitation allowed them to gain fifty strides.

AT last she sprang forward. In the land of Rocks her speed equalled that of the fastest runners, and doubtless she would have reached the thickets had not her path been barred by a passing herd of large deer, trotting to the forest. At sight of them the Gwahs hurried to cut her off, and the speediest one succeeded, calling his companions in a strident voice. The Gwahs hesitated but an instant between the girl and the four-footed game. The deer were already far off, the human prey was near.

They started after Glava with a great outcry.

She no longer hoped to hide in the bushes, where the Gwahs could have surrounded her easily, and counted solely on her speed. In fact, she ran quicker than those short-legged men, and after they had covered two thousand arms' lengths, she had gained five hundred.

Gradually she drew nearer the forest, although she had resolved not to enter it until she had attained a reassuring lead. For if the undergrowth offered many hiding places, it made running difficult. Moreover, the Gwahs were jungle people, skilled at sliding through spiny bushes and tangled growth. She turned at intervals, and perceived their odious silhouettes loping steadily, tirelessly.

The little jackal followed her without effort. Doubtless it vaguely understood this peril, which is never remote and which hovers eternally over jackals as well as antelopes and deer.

Glava's chest heaved. A sharp ache came below her ribs; her legs faltered. Two of the Gwahs were running now as fast as the girl. She knew it; her discouragement increased, despair leading to defeat and death. Nevertheless, all her will power concentrated on escape, and she fought the weakness of her limbs.

The forest was near, its fringe gnawing irregularly into the plain. A last time she turned, and this time she saw that the leading Gwahs were progressing faster than she. Then they were out of sight, a jutting clump of trees screening them.

The terrible choice had come; should she keep running or hide? She hesitated until her labored breathing, the hammering of her heart, persuaded her. She leaped across a pond of water,

trod on stones which would not reveal her passage, penetrated into the land of trees and numberless dens.

For a long time Glava roamed in the thickets, across clearings, without discovering a good hiding place. Branches smote her face as she sped by, spines brought blood on her hands, her knees, her feet. She paid no heed, and thought only of escaping the Men of the Night.

A brook barred her way. Instead of leaping across it, she waded on its bed, carrying the jackal. Thus, her tracks would be washed out.

She hesitated before a thick clump of bushes, fearing that a wild boar might be hidden there. Urged by her fatigue, she decided to take the risk, and slid to a small clearing in the center. Worn out, she slumped to the ground and was half-conscious, in a sort of torpor which abolished worry without lessening her caution. And as the shadows of the branches crept over the soil, she grew to hope that the Gwahs had lost her trail.

IN fact, they had lost it. For a long time they kept running through the fringe of the forest. Then they came to open country, saw nothing of their prey, and stopped. But their fierce instincts, their race hatred had been aroused. They belonged to a clan which never had allied itself with the Ougmars. As they had seen Glava from behind, they did not know she was a woman.

Tired and out of breath, they halted to confer. If their souls were rudimentary, scarcely less so than those of wolves or jackals, words wielded a fearful power among them. And that though they knew few words, and completed thoughts with gestures. They agreed that they had run too far, and that they were to retrace their steps.

While they were arguing, other Gwahs appeared, come from the river bank, where they had captured fish among the stones.

One of them was a chief, a chief such as the Gwahs had, one whose sway waned or grew according to circumstances. His ruses were many, he was more intelligent than the rest. He was more successful when hunting and brought back more flesh and fish than he needed, so that his surplus won him followers. He was told of the adventure.

"The stranger cannot live near the Gwahs!" he decided. "Ouak and the warriors must eat the stranger!"

In an instant, he became chief again. "The warriors must eat the stranger!" the others repeated.

Ouak made them understand that they must travel scattered, but remain in touch one with the others. If this tactic worked well when seeking wolves or boars, why would it not succeed when seeking a man? Those who had fish ate it raw, to avoid delay and be ready at once to follow Ouak. The tracks must be found. The Gwahs entered the forest.

If the Gwahs did not possess the wisdom of the Ougmars, they were patient as ants. They searched the forest for a fourth of one day. When they halted to rest, at a signal given by Ouak, they kept their intervals. The forest, in which traveled mammoths, stags, and boars, remained secretive, yielded no human trail. And Ouak's prestige dwindled with passing time, each Gwah resuming his liberty of action.

But, when the day was two-thirds spent, one of the hunters heard a short yelp from a thicket. He remembered that the running creature had been accompanied by a jackal, and signaled to his companions.

For some time Glava had sensed that humans were prowling near by. The jackal stretched out its sharp nose and moved its little ears. The scent of man was heavy on the air. The jackal yelped. She stood with an effort, still stiff from running, and her feet were black with dried blood. She listened and sniffed. Men were near!

She allowed a low moan to escape her lips, and despair raked her like a poison. Prone, her ear against the ground, she heard the crackling of twigs under feet, the soft crunching of steps. These noises came from all about her. She thought feverishly of flight, but she knew that she would meet men everywhere.

The steps came nearer, then a perceptible rustling announced a crawling man. Glava grasped club and stake. And she saw a head rise above the nearer bushes, black, with small rat's eyes and thick ferocious lips.

As she lifted the stake, that head vanished. A call vibrated, steps resounded everywhere. Death! Glava remembered the women sacrificed by the Tzohs to the Hidden Lives. She had seen them die, their eyes dilated by terror; she had heard their screams of agony.

This was what the somber men were bringing.

CHAPTER XV.

RETURN OF THE SCOUTS.

UNTIL dawn, the heavy rain had tormented the Ougmars. Without fire, in darkness so dense that they were as if buried in a black pit, with that soft and multiplied pattering of drops, bodies drenched by the cold liquid, they shuddered. At times they awoke from sodden slumber to intoler-

able sensations which stripped them of all strength, of all will power.

Those who surrounded Glava did not think of her, and the idea of an escape on such a night had not even entered their skulls. At last the rain stopped. Before dawn a cold wind blew upon their suffering flesh and a soft light seeped down. The nomads arose. One of them uttered a sharp exclamation and the others stared at him, puzzled.

"Where is the Tzoh woman?" the warrior asked.

Akroun gained his feet heavily. Slow aches twisted his muscles, for he had reached the age when humidity is evil in effects. At the warrior's cry he looked about, saw the captive had gone. Fury beat against his temples and his voice rose loudly.

"What ailed the men set to watch the Daughter of the Rocks? Where are their eyes, their ears, their hands—or are they like the worms crawling in the sod?"

The four warriors set on guard lowered their heads.

"Men who are blind and deaf cannot be called warriors. They deserve neither women nor sons. They are less useful than dogs!"

"The dogs did not bark!" one of the guards said, humbly.

"The Tzoh girl was no longer a stranger to them. But she should have been for men."

He was silent, torn between the desire to punish the culprits and the fear of losing followers. Glava was to have served his plans, by keeping Heigoun and Helvor in suspense, and finally throwing them against each other in mortal combat.

"Let the warriors scan the ground!" he ordered.

He looked for tracks himself, and was soon convinced that only chance

would cause them to find the fugitive. Perhaps she had dropped somewhere, from fatigue and cold. Like their chief, the warriors knew there would be no trail; the rain had drowned out everything. Nevertheless they pretended to search, some of them with suspicious ardor. One, reaching the shore, shouted:

"One of the canoes is gone!"

Then Akroun recalled that the Tzoh women had come into the Ougmars' realm in a boat, and while his anger against the young girl increased, it became mixed with admiration.

"That Tzoh woman fought at Helgvor's side!" he murmured. "She has the heart of a man!"

He thereupon desired to recapture her the more, for he recalled the glance glittering with hatred she had turned upon Heigoun. This made him think of his own grandmother, Awa, who had killed a warrior whom she had been forced to wed.

"Let two canoes go after her," he said. "But the warriors must return before the sun is midway between the river and the top of the sky."

The prolonged absence of Heigoun and Shtra worried him.

The pursuing canoes returned before the scouts. Akroun mused, filled with regret: "The Daughter of the Rocks is as clever as the lynx!"

SUBMITTING to fate, and having but a poor notion of passing time, he squatted again, waited. The sun crossed the zenith and was started westward when the watchers on the hills came back to camp from the northeast.

"Heigoun is in sight beyond the hills—returning."

The jaw of the chieftain protruded as he foresaw a victory for his rival.

"Heigoun is bringing prisoners!" another watcher announced.

The soul of the leader was bitter. His ears buzzed with the quickened flow of his blood; Heigoun would claim leadership now! Turning his face toward the hills he saw, standing on a crest, Heigoun waving his arms triumphantly, indicating two captive Tzohs and four women.

The Ougmars howled with frantic enthusiasm and one of them was bold enough to express the general belief: "Heigoun will make a great chief!"

All trotted to meet the newcomers. Three warriors, recognizing their women, leaped like wild sheep. Heigoun came straight to the chief and said with significant pride: "Here are two captives and four women; three Tzohs were slain."

"Heigoun is a skilled warrior!" Akroun tore the words from his heart. "How many Tzohs did he fight?"

"Five!" Heigoun answered. "Did I not state that there were two captives, that three had been slain?"

"Why were there but five Tzohs?" Akroun wondered.

"There were twenty Tzohs or more before, and ten women," one of the Ougmar women replied. "The flood drowned six women and fifteen warriors. Then Heigoun came with his companions."

"Did the five Tzohs fight hard?" Akroun asked, cleverly.

"They were worn out, spent," the woman answered, without distrust.

Silent laughter creased the corners of Akroun's eyes, while Heigoun glared at the woman with indignation. But few of the Ougmars understood; all admired the skill of Heigoun. The warriors crowded around the captives, who appeared pitiful, covered with bloody mud, their lean bellies heaving,

pupils dilated by fever, quivering with dread. Not a few insulted them and threatened them with death.

"The Son of the Wolf wanted the Ougmars to see the faces of their foes," Heigoun stated. "Now they may be put to death."

"Why not?" the woman who had already spoken offered. "Did they not massacre the old men, the children of the Ougmars? Did they not beat their women?"

A warrior lifted his hatchet, wildly approved by vehement clamors, and already spears pierced the bellies of the unlucky fellows, who lifted pleading hands. Clubs fell, stakes were pushed forward. The Tzohs, prone on the ground, struggled hopelessly, with shrill yells.

Sickened, Akroun and a few of his men drew aside.

Heigoun, who had been peering about avidly for Glava, asked:

"Where is the foreign woman?"

"She fled," Akroun said nervously.

"The foreign woman has fled?" Heigoun said with rage. His huge shoulders swayed, his eyes menaced the chieftain. "Who let her go?"

"The chief shall say that later," Akroun said, shaking his head. He had straightened, hatred had given him back energy. Heigoun saw that he must not go too far.

"Let her be sought for!" he suggested.

"She has been sought for."

"Shtra did not come back as yet?" Heigoun asked. Already calm was returning to him, his voice was no longer gruff.

"Shtra did not come back."

Heavy laughter shook Heigoun's frame. He hoped that Helgvor had perished, and that hope made him joyous. Then fierce doubt assailed him;

had the Tzoh woman left to seek the Son of Shtra?

THE sun had slid down the sky and Shtra had not appeared. Keen anguish bit at Akroun's heart. Without Shtra, lacking Helgvor, the struggle became harder, victory uncertain. Meanwhile, the women had told their story, and it was known that an important troop of Tzohs was fleeing southeast, while another had remained close to the river.

A choice must be made, for it would have been dangerous to split the forces of the Ougmars. Heigoun and his followers insisted that the party go southeast. Akroun protested.

"We must await the return of Shtra!"

"Shtra will not return," laughed the giant.

A remote shout rose on the southern hills and a watcher waved his arms.

"There!" Akroun said. "We must wait."

He did not know whether the sentries announced good or bad news, and watched a man coming with long strides. The watcher shouted as he came nearer: "Shtra is coming back!"

"Does he bring back prisoners?" Heigoun asked, sarcastically.

"He brings back women—many women."

"Many women?" Heigoun repeated, his face paling.

"Twice as many as the fingers of one hand, at least."

The warriors, crowded to listen to the man, bellowed like a herd of aurochs. Some were saying: "Shtra is a great warrior!"

But Heigoun felt that Shtra was not the real victor, and murderous blood now pounded against his temples, while a quick joy animated Akroun.

Soon Shtra, Helgvor, Iouk, four other Ougmars, a score of women and the Gwahs appeared.

As when Heigoun had returned, all the warriors rushed to meet the scouts. Many, recognizing their wives, laughed with savage mirth as they ran. Shtra stepped before the chief.

"Here are those whom Helgvor, Shtra and the warriors bring back to the Ougmars."

"And what of the Tzohs?" the chieftain asked.

"Almost all are dead. Very few were saved. They were three times as many as the fingers of one hand."

As Heigoun laughed insultingly, Shtra, Iouk, Helgvor and the others silently threw at Akroun's feet the severed thumbs of the warriors. There were twenty-four!

"It is well," the chief said. "Shtra is indeed a great warrior."

"Shtra is not a great warrior," the old man answered. "It was Helgvor, clever as a lynx, strong as a tiger. He killed more than twelve Tzohs!"

"Shtra lies!" Heigoun yelled.

"Shtra tells the truth!" Iouk said.

And the warriors who had followed Shtra shouted:

"Shtra tells the truth!"

Then many other warriors hailed Helgvor, and Akroun felt his power returning.

"Helgvor is mightier than Heigoun!" a voice said in the crowd.

"Heigoun shall crush Helgvor as the leopard crushes the doe!" roared the Son of the Wolf.

"Helgvor does not fear Heigoun," the young man said. He faced the giant, spear and club ready, but warriors intervened while Akroun spoke.

"The Ougmars have not recaptured all their women! They need both Heigoun and Helgvor!"

"Heed Akroun, the chief!" twenty voices shouted.

The Son of the Wolf controlled his choler. "Helgvor shall perish when the women are retaken!"

"Helgvor shall beat down Heigoun!" Then Helgvor, astonished not to see Glava, asked: "Where is the Daughter of the Rocks?"

"The foreign woman fled!" the chief explained. "Rain drowned the camp, the fires were dead. It was so black that a herd of mammoths would have passed unseen. Even the dogs knew nothing."

Speaking thus, Akroun reassured and won to his side those who had watched Glava, for they knew that if Heigoun became chief, they would suffer. As had his rival, Helgvor said:

"She must be caught."

"The warriors sought her long."

The gloom which swept Helgvor was so intense that he forgot his recent victory. "Helgvor will go to seek Glava!" he stated.

"Not until the Ougmars have retaken their women!" the chief replied.

A longing to rebel shook the young man, but the Law of the Race won out. "Helgvor shall wait until the women are retaken!"

CHAPTER XVI.

BATTLE PLANS.

BECAUSE the sun was low, Akroun put off the start until morning. Now, only one path appeared good, for Shtra, Iouk and Helgvor agreed with Heigoun, and all the women advised it.

"To-morrow we leave for the south-east," the chief said.

During the night Helgvor awoke, thought of Glava. He knew she would

undertake to find Amhao. If the coming expedition was quickly over, perhaps he would reach the Red Peninsula before her. That hope appeased him for a moment, then the fear of the perils she would run contracted his chest. He saw her being downed by a wild beast, drowning in the river, and infinite desolation seeped into him.

At dawn Akroun called the older warriors together.

"The women could not follow quickly enough. They must return with a few guards to the Red Peninsula."

Some of the Ougmars received this advice with regret.

"Won't the Tzohs come back to capture them again?"

"The Tzohs won't dare. They've lost too many warriors."

When those who were to escort the women were selected, Helgvor asked Shtra to propose him for the mission. Both Akroun and Heigoun refused.

Beyond the hills of the southeast, the plain spread endlessly, an ocean of grass on which existed the great grass-eaters, mammoths, horses, aurochs, antelopes, deer, galloping under the rough glare of the sun, under the drifting clouds, through storms and the white ferocity of the winters.

After a few hours of march the ponds were reached, around which the Tzohs had been found, and all sought for the tracks of the band which had started eastward. By evening a warrior named Akr discovered the ashes of an encampment and the stripped carcass of a stag.

The dogs sniffed about, the men bent low to scan spoor.

"The Tzohs camped here several days ago," Shtra stated.

A coppery twilight, fused with blues and greens, spread across the western

clouds, on which the crescent moon etched its slender horns. A warm wind caressed the men's faces. The chief was uneasy. The tracks by the ponds announced a strong party of Tzohs, and the glance of Akroun wandered often to count the Ougmars and the Gwahs.

Because they were kept supplied with roasted meat, a happy confidence reigned. But there was no joy for Helgvor; the world seemed lost, his happiness had gone with the Daughter of the Rocks, into the solitude.

"The eyes and ears of Helgvor must be keen," Shtra whispered. "Heigoun will make traps."

"The same soil can no longer bear us both!" Helgvor agreed.

"Shtra will fight for his son."

"Iouk also."

A brief tenderness shaped in those primitive souls, which mingled with dim shame within the rough instincts. Shtra had watched over the childhood of his companions. Irresolute man, mediocre warrior, he loved his own people and Akroun, of whom he felt the superiority with a vague pleasure at being dominated. Iouk was much like him, and both, effortlessly, centered their family pride upon Helgvor. Despite his quicker passions, his deeper hates and his fiercer anger, Helgvor shared with them the weakness of being affectionate, and at times even merciful.

"Akroun is also Helgvor's friend!" Shtra resumed after glancing about cautiously. "He desires the death of Heigoun because Heigoun wants to take command and kill Akroun!"

"We are the chief's allies!"

A lion appeared upon a hillock, shook his mane and his enormous voice roared a threat to space; wolves, dogs and a panther were seen. Yet the men

dominated the land. Even the mammoth and the rhinoceros retreated before man, who ruled the Earth.

At times the glance of Helgvor turned toward the northern section of the camp, where rested Heigoun and his followers.

NIGHT followed day, day followed night, many times.

The men marched to their destiny. The plain was broken by clumps of trees, and sometimes by thick forests which warned of the proximity of the southeastern jungle.

Had it not been for the ashes of fires, the tracks might have been lost definitely. But the Tzohs lighted fires each night. It had been ascertained from these that the troop numbered sixty warriors and a score of women.

Their march had been much slower than the progress of the Ougmars, and the time came when but a half-day's march separated the two hordes. To cut down that distance the more, the Ougmars marched several hours by the light of the moon, which had become full.

Akroun then gathered the veteran warriors.

"To-morrow the Ougmars fight!" he said.

And all understood that the battle would be bitterly waged.

"The Ougmars must surprise the Tzohs!" the chief added.

"During the march or in camp?" asked the oldest fighter.

"At twilight," Shtra advised.

"Thus did Helgvor vanquish."

"If they must be surprised on the march," Akroun wondered, "must we not head them off?"

"Heigoun will surprise them!" the giant declared.

"Heigoun is powerful as the aurochs! But the aurochs is not as speedy as the stag or the wolf! Now, Helgvor is swift—" Akroun allowed his words to sink in. "What Helgvor did was well done. The fleetest shall precede us, and because it will take one day to reach the Tzohs, it shall be toward night that we attack them. We shall have the light that lingers after the sun has sunk into the lakes, and then the full light of the moon. Therefore, Helgvor and the most agile Ougmars shall lure the Tzohs out of their camp, and we will surprise them. Heigoun will smash them up with his club."

The giant did not like the plan, but the others approved.

"Which of the warriors shall go with Helgvor?"

There were Akr, Houam and Pzahn, all three in their youth. Akr was the fleetest, Pzahn the slowest.

"Pzahn will fight with the clan," Helgvor decided. "There is no need of more than three men. Before daylight we shall leave, with my wolf and my dog; they know how to keep silent."

"So be it!" Akroun concluded.

But Heigoun turned a murderous stare upon the young man.

Helgvor rose an hour before dawn. The moon was huge on the western sky, the hue of molten copper. Akr and Houam were ready, both thin, with weak arms and long legs. Akr had raced against Helgvor in the past. For many seasons, their speeds had been equal, first one then the other won out. Then Helgvor had won all the time. It was not likely that among the short-legged Tzohs there would be any who could catch Akr, but Houam was not as fast, not as trustworthy.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.

Helgvor of the Blue River

By J. H. ROSNY AINÉ with GEORGES SURDEZ

Helgvor, about to lead his primitive clansmen to battle, did not know that the woman he had chosen as mate was surrounded by cannibals



LEADING UP TO THIS CONCLUDING INSTALLMENT

PRESSING forward to battle, a little band of Ougmars come within striking distance of the enemy—marauding Tzoh warriors who have raided the Ougmar camp and kidnaped the women of the clan.

Akroun, chief of the Ougmars, is directing the battle plans, but he is having difficulty controlling two of his young warriors: Heigoun, the boastful strong man of the tribe, and Helgvor, clear eyed, straight limbed hunter who

is not impressed by Heigoun's strength or his boasting.

The enmity between the two has been caused by Heigoun's challenge. Helgvor, in tracking down the Tzoh raiders, had come upon Glava, a Tzoh woman who was fleeing her cruel tribesmen. Helgvor, after helping her to escape, took her to his own tribe, where he announced that she was to become his mate. Heigoun desires her, and the two men have agreed that they will do battle for her after the pursuit of the Tzohs is ended.

Both Heigoun and Kzahn staggered from the impact

This story began in the Argosy for May 28.

Glava, who has accompanied the Ougmars on their march, to show them the way to the Tzoh country, fears the unwelcome attentions of Heigoun and escapes during the night. A greater peril faces her now, however. In a forest she has been surrounded by a savage tribe of black-faced Gwahs, eaters of human flesh. She is about to be captured.

Helgvor, ignorant of her fate, has gone ahead of the main body of Ougmars, to act as scout and to draw the enemy into ambush. Heigoun remains with the main body of warriors.

CHAPTER XVII.

BATTLE OF THE CLANS.

FIRST, Helgvor and his two fellow scouts had to ascertain the strength of the enemy and report to the chief. Only toward evening, Akroun having prepared the ambush, should Helgvor lure the Tzohs to their doom.

The Tzohs had changed their route since the preceding night, striking westward, probably in the hope of finding the river again. On the terrain covered in the last few days, the flood had caused no damage. It was seldom that the ravines had been found flooded.

Helgvor, with his wolf and his dog, followed the trail as easily as if the foe had been in sight. The tracks were so clear that they had to proceed with care. Luckily, there were few thickets, and the grass was rather short.

At noon they came to a range of hills rising from the plain. As they climbed the slopes, Helgvor and Akr found many traces, and when they reached the crest, the scouts saw the enemy's band and the women. The sight of the women and the girls maddened Houam.

for the Men of the Rocks had taken away his mate and his young sisters. Hatred stirred Akr, although his wife was among those who had already been rescued by Helgvor. Because he had lived through a like adventure before, Helgvor remained calm, although his heart beat harder.

"We must go downhill by the ravine," he suggested. "Then circle the pools." Casting a glance at the sky to ascertain the time, Helgvor added: "Will Houam go back to our people and warn them?"

As agreed, the scouts had left clear traces of their march, and Akroun could have had no trouble following them.

"Houam will warn the warriors."

While Houam went back to the northwest, Helgvor and Akr passed through the ravine and circled the pools. Skilled at hiding themselves, nothing betrayed them. And the Tzohs walked without fear, confident because of their numbers. They marched slowly. The flood had reached this section and made the trip difficult. Many were obviously tired, not a few wounded. Moreover, the women had to be spared too great fatigue.

Through the grass, behind hillocks, bushes and trees, Helgvor and Akr followed the hostile horde. The Tzohs halted before the sun grew red with approaching twilight. They had chosen a formidable position in which to camp. Protected by pools and boulders, it could be reached only through a gap in the rocks, easily fortified, easily defended. Pines and firs supplied wood for the fires.

"The Tzohs are mighty!" Akr said, doubtfully.

"The Ougmars shall not attack their camp!" Helgvor replied. He laughed low, and resumed: "They would be

dangerous to attack with club and spear, with hatchets. Dangerous also against spears. For one would have to risk their weapons in return. But, with his bow, Helgvor can harm them without coming within their range."

He indicated his bow, and Akr, knowing his reputation, grinned. The Tzohs were still gathering wood, and a few came toward the bush behind which the two Ougmars had taken shelter. Although it was improbable that they would come this far, Helgvor and Akr retreated to the tall grass. The dog and the wolf, now accustomed to hunting man, imitated them without need of speech.

THE sun was setting in an enormous blaze of red against the west when Houam returned.

"The Ougmars are in the ravine," he said.

He related that Akroun had chosen a spot pitted with caves. But Helgvor went back to the main body. He addressed the chief.

"This place is too far to lure the Tzohs."

"Let Helgvor guide us."

And the Son of Shtra led the Ougmars into a thicket within a thousand cubits of the Tzohs' camp. The sun had vanished and light was dwindling on the plain.

"We must wait for moonlight," the chief said. "What does Helgvor wish now?"

"Another bow and many arrows."

Behind the fires of the Tzohs, glowing brighter as the twilight darkened, the swarthy faces of the warriors could be seen clearly. The women also could be discerned, and many of them appeared resigned to their lot.

Helgvor selected a second bow, that of a warrior with mighty arms, a weap-

on which few men could use well. Arrows were brought. Helgvor tested the bow, adjusted its tension. Then, patient as animals in ambush, the warriors waited in the shadow. The sky was overcast, and they saw neither the great blue star, the Northern Cross, nor the red star. Many closed their eyes and drifted into a light sleep. Then the moon appeared at the edge of the plain, dipped its distorted disk into pools, while millions of frogs croaked like old men.

"The Son of Shtra must prepare to go," Akroun said.

The orb, at first much like a red cloud, condensed and became like the polished blade of a hatchet; its light turned the plain into a limitless, silvery lake.

Already, followed by Akr, Helgvor crawled through the grass. When they had gone five hundred paces, Akr hid, and permitted the Son of Shtra to go on alone. The Tzohs were dropping off to sleep. A few sentries squatted near the entrance. Before so many warriors skilled in the use of hatchet and all weapons, what could be done by a lion, a tiger, or a gray bear? Spears alone would have riddled them. The Tzohs felt secure.

Suddenly, the only presence they would fear manifested itself: A tall man was standing in the grass!

At the first alarm, Kzahn, Son of the Boar, stood. The warriors, startled from sleep, were puzzled and belated questions. And the resounding voice of Helgvor defied them.

"The Ougmars come to punish the skunks!"

Clubs whirled, spears were darted. Helgvor, with a savage laugh, took his bow and aimed. The arrow pierced the neck of a Tzoh. The outcry died out and deep surprise immobilized the Men

of the Rocks; no Tzoh bow could have sent an arrow that distance. Advancing a few steps, Helgvor shot again; the arrow stabbed between the ribs of another man.

Upon an order from Kzahn, the warriors fell headlong to the ground. The third arrow missed, the fourth dug into a shoulder. Thus, Helgvor made the camp unsafe.

Seeing but a single warrior, Kzahn grew ashamed and ordered a pursuit. Not too trustful, nevertheless, he dispatched but fifteen warriors against that odd adversary. Feeling that delay was dangerous, the warriors rushed headlong. Helgvor waited for them to come halfway, his bow hummed three times. The first arrow pierced a belly, the second knocked out an eye, the third missed. Several of the Tzohs returned his shots, and an arrow scratched his thigh, but the Ougmar ran, and increased the distance separating him from his pursuers.

The appearance of Akr worried the Tzohs' and slowed them a while. He fired an arrow, missed, and pretended to flee, while Helgvor stood still. Five men headed for Akr, eight sought to surround Helgvor, who avoided them with ease.

Scattered in a semi-circle, fierce and desperate, for the fugitive's speed left them small hope, they kept on stubbornly. Then Helgvor raced to the right and, with a blow of his club, killed an isolated warrior. Then his arrows hummed again, and he faced the remaining five.

"The Tzohs are not even hyenas!" he derided them. "The Tzohs can't fight any one but old men and women!"

Some distance away, Akr had reached the ambush. Twenty Ougmars leaped out, terrifying the Tzohs, who were killed off almost without of-

fering resistance, while Helgvor dropped two more of his foes.

NOW, Kzahn was aware that the night of life or death had come.

The Ougmars, the Gwahs and the dogs howled all together. Because they had appeared suddenly where they were not expected, they seemed the more formidable. Memories were stirred in the skulls of the veterans, the legends woven around the Ougmars. But the battle must be fought; the Ougmars were coming. Around them were scattered the fierce dogs and the Gwahs with pointed ears.

Furious puzzlement quivered in the Black Boar's breast. He thought of rushing out to meet his enemies, but the numbers of the Tzohs and those of the Ougmars were now almost equal, and moreover there were those black men, those dogs with the terrifying bark. From the elders, Kzahn had heard of the Men of the River, knew their strength to be great, their agility extreme. He alone, he thought, was more formidable than any Ougmar. He decided to wait for the attack and had fresh branches piled across the gateway. The warriors could take shelter behind the heap of wood and bush.

But Akroun called a halt, to inspect the Tzohs' camp. He saw that the storming would be hard to push through, and would cost many lives.

"It is wood that fire loves to eat," Helgvor said, coming near.

"Helgvor is as sly as he is valiant," Akroun smiled.

He ordered that dry branches and twigs be gathered, then, torches in hand, the Ougmars went forward once more. Arrived close to the camp, they tossed the flaming bundles into the barrier. Smoke lifted.

Kzahn had guessed his foes' plan

quickly. To avoid the spread of flames over the entire camp, he ordered the barrier fired, and the two blazes clashed. On both sides, men waited until nothing but ashes remained. As the Ougmars had to cross a narrow spot or wade in the pools, Kzahn decided to stand his ground and wait for them.

"The Men of the Blue River seek to die!" he clamored to cheer his followers. "They shall die!"

The Ougmars replied with their war cry, but still Akroun delayed an onrush. He preferred to order his best bowmen, Helgvor principally, to harass the enemy with arrows. This tactic could not fail. When several Tzohs had dropped, Kzahn realized that his wait meant disaster, and ordered an offensive movement.

It was like a mass of bodies, of hatchets, stakes, clubs and spears. Fearing panic, Akroun opposed onslaught with onslaught. The mass of the Ougmars dashed forward, while the Gwahs hovered on the flanks, pelting the Tzohs with sharp stones.

THE two hordes collided; young and strong men left life. Heigoun, Kzahn, Helgvor, with the more muscular of the fighters, struck with clubs, broke bones. Others, armed with stakes, aimed for the body, disemboweled their antagonists. Many used the spear, striking for the soft places. While the spring of the Tzohs appeared to triumph at first, the Ougmars soon were masters.

Heigoun and Kzahn came face to face. Their bulks were alike. Both had the deep chest of the bear, monstrous shoulders and legs like oak branches. Their clubs clashed like rock on rock, and the impact was so terrific that both staggered back.

Astonished, each now aware of the strength of his enemy, they hesitated, eyed each other, and planned clever strokes. Rasher, Heigoun resumed the fight, and his swinging club would have crushed Kzahn's skull had not the other parried. The Black Boar swung on the flank, mightily. But an Ougmar warrior shoved the club aside, hitting Kzahn on the shoulder. Heigoun got home two blows immediately, one to the other shoulder, the other on the neck.

Kzahn fell to the ground and Heigoun shattered his ribs and his limbs.

The defeat of their chief discouraged the Tzohs; only a few kept on fighting. The mass suddenly became as does under the claws of the leopards, like stags before the tiger, and perished without combat, struck down by the hatchets, the clubs and the heavy stakes.

Akroun looked down upon the corpses and the bodies of those not yet dead. The women had come to greet their men, who dripped with fresh gore.

"The Ougmars are mighty; the Ougmars have annihilated their enemies!" the chief proclaimed, tossing a spear into the air. All the warriors acknowledged his worth. His reputation would last a long time, for the hero of the day was much too young to command.

"Akroun is a great chief!" Shtra declared solemnly.

"Helgvor is a great warrior!" the chief replied.

Heigoun, somber, sullen, eyed Helgvor steadily.

The clan was taking the women back to the Red Peninsula, but Helgvor, with Jouk and Akr, sought Glava's tracks.

The left bank having proved fruit-

less, Helgvor had thought of the right shore and the islands, particularly of the tiny islets on which animals were scarce. Akr explored ardently, for he loved to seek for trails above all things, loved to direct the dog. Days passed without result, until one morning when Akr picked up a spear with a broken head. Poorly chipped, the stone point was not the work of Ougmar or Tzoh, while the Gwahs used only stakes and stones.

Later, a second indice was found, on an island; Helgvor, Iouk and Akr found ashes, a squirrel skin, the shell of a tortoise blackened with smoke.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SACRIFICE TO THE RED MOON.

GLAVA waited with her limbs stiff with horror. Terrorized, the little jackal had fled. There were pauses, absolute silence, then crawlings, creepings, heavy breathing. Stake in hand, ready to fight, Glava was moved by the instinct of hunted beasts, and felt in advance the anguish of death.

The attack was brutal as the leap of the leopard, sly as the onslaught of wolves. The Gwahs, springing together in a somber, moving mass, overpowered their victim. The only blow she contrived to deliver dropped a Gwah, but ten arms were around her like black reptiles, and collective strength vanquished individual vigor. Blows with sharp stones dazed her. Lianas were wound around her limbs.

"The Gwahs are the masters of the daughter of the Blue River!" Ouak clamored.

Because his ruses had succeeded, his authority increased. All the others thought merely of drinking warm blood, of eating flesh, but Ouak was

sensitive to the mysterious allure of the tall, flexible maid, whose light complexion made her so startling among the black masks surrounding her.

"The foreign woman must be killed!" one of the men said.

"The Gwahs shall kill her," Ouak agreed, "but she shall be offered in sacrifice to the Red Moon!"

This was the most important of the rites performed according to ancestral traditions by the Men of the Night. The flesh of beings sacrificed to the Red Moon had particular virtues, and the mention of the sacrifice recalled evenings of absolute happiness. Even the greediest accepted the delay, and Ouak had gained time to think of some way to be alone with the captive.

"The Daughter of the River shall perish beneath the Pointed Rock!" he added.

Then, four Gwahs carried Glava through the forest. She closed her eyes, unable to look at these men without frightened disgust. Perhaps she would have suffered less under the claws of the gray bear or the tiger. Racial instinct made the Gwahs more odious than Old Man Urm, than Kzahn with the bison's head, than even that gigantic Ougmar from whom she had fled. She felt the end approaching.

They passed between trees older than one hundred human generations; grass died in their shade, in their clefts, large as caves, dwelt wild beasts. The trees grew scarcer, the soil was hard and red. Then they came to a pointed rock, in a cluster of black pines.

Gwahs, men, women and children, emerged as if from the ground, howling hideously, clawing toward the prisoner. Glava thought her life was finished. The hot blood of youth re-

volted against destruction. Amhao seemed to float in the sky, together with the tall Ougmar warrior who had saved her, the memory of whom made the Gwahs appear more ugly, more sordid.

THE women, ardent as she-wolves, were for putting the captive to death at once.

"Ouak has heard the voice of the Red Moon," the chief said, to quiet them.

The women accepted this explanation, but watched over the girl with blood-thirsting jealousy. In vain Ouak used all his ruses; he discovered no reason for being alone with the prisoner. In any case, as this was a ritual question, his prestige availed nothing against the opinion of the old men, in whose heads were kept alive the obscure legends.

A stag was captured alive, and joy increased. It would be sacrificed at the same time as the foreign woman. And the time drew near when the Red Moon would swing into the sky.

Two men unfastened the lianas binding Glava. Five others came, armed with sharp stakes, and the girl knew she was to die. An old Gwah started a ritual chant, monotonous as the dripping of rain on stones.

"The Gwahs were born of the Night and the Red Moon yields them strength! The Gwahs are the masters of the forest, and those who walk on all fours fear the stakes and the sharp stones! When strangers come into the forest, the strangers must perish, and the Gwahs must drink their blood! The Gwahs were born of the Night and the Red Moon grants them strength!"

The men brandished their stakes, the women yelped horribly, and all repeated in chorus: "The strangers must

perish, and the Gwahs must drink their blood!"

Then the old man indicated Glava, and resumed his chant:

"That woman is a stranger. She shall perish!"

The stakes menaced the Daughter of the Rocks.

There was a great silence; the Red Moon was about to be born anew. A pale light filtered among the western stars, a cloud was illuminated, and suddenly the Red Moon lifted her disk above the horizon.

The old man chanted: "Red Moon, Red Moon, who made a pact with our ancestors, here is the stranger! Her blood shall flow before thee, and thou shalt hear her cry of agony!"

He lifted both arms to give the signal, and his eyes dimmed with terror. Somber silhouettes had leaped from a clump of bushes, came on, numerous as the ants from a heap. Belching like bison, impetuous, they attacked.

They were the Upper Gwahs, whose legs were longer than those of the Lower Tribes, whose hair was spotted as the pelt of the panther, but whose skins were also porous and sweaty. Their thick lips were drawn back on sharp teeth. Often, a generation would pass on without their appearance, but their hatred was eternal.

WOMEN fled, the males turned their stakes against the invaders, and the battle started, at the end of which the living would eat the dead. Alone beneath the Pointed Rock, Glava was paralyzed by surprise for a moment, then, understanding that her death had been delayed by fate, she sought cover.

Near by ran Gwah women, so frightened that they did not recognize

the stranger. But when they reached the shadows of the old trees, two of them instinctively leaped upon the Daughter of the Rocks.

She dropped the first one with a blow and, grasping the other by the hair, dragged her to the ground. Bewildered, the others allowed the prisoner to escape, and soon she was a long distance ahead, out of their reach. She no longer felt fatigue nor pain. Drunk with the joy of living, she crossed an immense stretch, and only stopped when tired out.

The stars twinkled through the leaves, branches palpitated in the wind. She flung her arms wide and dropped to the soil. She slept there, at the mercy of prowling animals.

When she awoke, the patient moon had reached the zenith. A night-bird flew away like an enormous, dark butterfly. Near by, animals grazed, and Glava, sitting up, saw herself surrounded with monstrous shapes. The nearest one was as bulky as seven aurochs, resembled a boulder covered with reddish moss. The block of the head ended in a long snake, twisting between white horns, large as the horns of ten bison, which were tusks. Four cylinders thick as tree-trunks supported chest and belly.

Glava recognized the mammoth. For thousands of years such beasts had not inhabited the Land of the Tzohs, and in the territories of Ougmars and Gwahs they grew rarer as the centuries passed. The Daughter of the Rocks had first seen mammoths during her flight with Amhao. This one, standing in the moonlight, formed an imperishable image in the eyes of the fugitive.

Dull fear seized her; she looked at the other mammoths, under the low branches, with the light of the moon drenching their backs, and because they

were so like the first, her amazement did not increase. But the impression made by this giant stirred her to active fear.

Glava knew that she was in the center of immense forces, any one of which could crush her as she could crush a lizard. The formidable beasts were asleep, and she could hear the rhythm of their breathing. They feared nothing in the murderous forest, neither tiger, lion, gray bear, nor poorly armed Gwahs, and were endangered only when faced by the rhinoceros who occasionally clashed with them, and tried to pierce their bellies with his spike. But the mammoth oftener than not crushed him beneath his tremendous weight. And those encounters were so rare that generations of mammoths knew nothing of them.

For several thousand centuries the ancestors of the mammoths had lived in a dreamy peace. Now the time had come when, upon a warmer earth, their number dwindled. Those who were to exist for a long time were far north, on plains where water became stone as early as autumn.

The future did not exist for them; peaceful innocence filled their hearts. But the summers were becoming too hot for them, and on very long days, when the sun consumed half the night, they plunged their hairy bulks into the river, into lakes, into pools, to refresh themselves. They felt better during the cool autumn months.

DAWN broke, dimmer than moonlight, then day came, with its bird songs and colored clouds. Glava was no longer afraid. While she had slept, exhausted, still as death, one of the mammoths had investigated her. As she did not move, the instinct of the animal supposed that she lacked

that life which troubles other lives. And he readily granted her the small stretch of soil she occupied.

When the animals awoke, her scent was familiar. All that recurs without bringing annoyance or danger becomes indifferent or loved by the living. The mammoths accepted Glava as they would have accepted a tree or a stag.

She also felt, although differently, the security of repetition. When the mammoths strode away, to seek better pasture, she followed them, because she feared the Gwahs, keeping nearest the one who knew her best. The others, as time passed, grew accustomed to her presence. And a whole day elapsed. She found nuts, roots and mushrooms which fed her, while they ate bark, tender stems, grasses or the tufts of aquatic plants.

On the second day, she circulated in the herd as if she had been with the mammoths for several seasons. Her scent was so well known that they forgot her. In all things they proved themselves better than men; none were inclined to kill her or to cause her suffering. They roamed at random through the forest and the marshes. The world entered through their tiny eyes, the hue of sod, and they had an intelligence special to them, which permitted them to know what was harmful and what was good.

Glava lived more at ease while with them than she had among the Tzohs, where the weak were sacrificed, or among the Ougmars, where she had met Heigoun. She was sad, however, for she needed Amhao, and although she did not know it, she missed the tall, tawny warrior.

Perhaps she could have become friendlier with the mammoths, by digging up roots for them or selecting tender twigs for offerings. But their bulk

frightened her, and that strange hairy snake swinging between the immense tusks, their enormous legs which might crush her with ease. She kept her distance, and if they did not threaten her, they made no effort to know her better.

They marched uphill through the forest, farther from the river each day, so that she soon realized she would have to leave them. This was a hard decision to make, for she feared the Gwahs, the Red Moon, the evening fires, death.

Nevertheless, she allowed them to go off without her one morning. The thickets screened them. Alone, she felt rising in her the horror of meat-eaters, and she hid a long while under branches. The numberless sounds, which she had not heeded when with the mammoths, resumed their ferocious significance. The shadows held lurking monsters. Armed with a clumsy stake and sharp stones, she traveled in this land of claws, of teeth and venoms, all her senses keyed for a brief future.

As after her flight from the Ougmar camp, she found herself lacking fire. The flints she found produced small sparks, but she could not set flame to grass. She encountered the wolf, the hyena, the brown bear, the panther. None attacked her. But she saw no lion, no tiger, no gray bear, beasts that retreat before none save the mammoth, the rhinoceros—or fire.

At last she reached the river and knew her way.

She walked and walked. At night, she sought shelter. And fate spared her.

AT the end of a day, after seeking long, she selected a flat space on a steep rock, five arms' lengths above the ground. The stars were out, she was tired, and she trusted herself

to the night. Wolves, hyenas, jackals, passed by, ascertained that they could not reach her, went their way. Glava would awake, watch for awhile, fall asleep again.

Toward morning a terrible life halted near the boulder. In the weak light seeping out of the east, by the lingering glow of the stars, the shape recalled that of the tiger. But it was a large, handsome lioness, full grown and very strong. Her light-colored pelt, her eyes with round pupils, were enough to distinguish her from the striped feline, the eyes of which are oval. But the manner was the same, that patient watchfulness, in a huddling crouch.

As her scent was poor, chance had caused her to stop near. A gust of wind had brought the smell of Glava to her nostrils. Having eaten the women and children of the Gwahs, she knew human odors. Of late, her hunts had not been successful. Accumulated hungers twisted her belly. And there was a prey upon the boulder which would sate her craving.

But the needed leap worried her. If the prey fought, she would be in a bad position, and she recalled a blow from a sharp stick, flush on the nose, delivered by one of the women she had caught. With raging impatience, certain that the erect creature could not flee, she watched.

Finally, trying to surprise Glava, she stood up against the side of the boulder. Glava had watched her without showing herself. And she saw no lane of escape. When the lioness leaped, Glava would die. She saw the beast prowl about the boulder, smell the wind. Occasionally she heard heavy breathing or a low dull roar. Immobility was her defense. But when the lioness reared her body against the rock immobility became dangerous,

and standing in her turn, the girl spoke in a strident voice:

"The stake of Glava is sharp, it shall sink in the lioness's jaws! Sharp stones will put out her eyes!"

The animal, astonished, retreated as if to think the situation over. Glava had but one hope, that another life might pass, easier to catch. No life passed by, and the lioness sprang. The point of the stake broke off on her hard skull, and, one hip ripped open by a clawing stroke, Glava rolled helplessly from the flat surface down to the plain. She was helpless, closed her eyes, and waited for the lioness to devour her.

A shadowy form appeared near the boulder.

The feline, turning, beheld an immense and hideous beast. A horn jutted from its nose, another was planted in the middle of the ungainly head. Its skin was like the bark of very old trees, its eyes were tiny and stupid. Survivor of a formidable breed which had vanished almost altogether, evil-tempered and ferocious, the beast had probably been awakened by the noise of the struggle and had come to investigate.

The ancestors of the lioness, recognizing a rhinoceros, would have fled without hesitation.

But she was surprised, excited by the conquest of copious flesh, hesitated a moment, then it was too late. The enormous mass charged headlong. The lioness clawed at random, bit, but the rhinoceros, invulnerable, had but to pass. She was stretched out, ribs smashed in, entrails showing, moaning with pain. The huge animal turned, trampled her, scattered her bones, her flesh, her hide. Then, his rage vented, he trotted away, forgetting the other being.

Glava had crawled behind the boulder. Her blood spurted. Her head

was light, her eyes no longer saw, she fainted.

CHAPTER XIX.

REUNION.

WHEN she came to, a man was staring at her.

"Helgvor!"

He had come out of the limitless solitude. And despite her pain, despite her weakness, she knew the unfathomable happiness of not being alone. Two other men were near by. When with the Ougmars she had learned that Iouk was a quiet man, and she guessed that Akr, slight, almost frail, would obey the others. For a time she took joy in not being alone, and a great tenderness went from her toward Helgvor.

Then she asked: "Amhao?"

"We'll find Amhao!" he said.

She trusted her destiny to the tall nomad, and sank into fever, fatigue—and faith.

The wound was deep and the fall had harmed the bones. Glava suffered, bravely. In the mystery of instinct, she felt that Helgvor was more tender than she had ever been. Her astonishment was limitless, that such gentleness was not a weakness; for was he not as brave as a tiger, as clever as a wolf, as skilled as the most feared warrior?

No other man resembled him; he was alone; he seemed to spring from an unknown race. Her horror of men who break off women's teeth, who beat them, or throw them in sacrifice to the Hidden Lives, did not extend to him.

And Glava was revealed to Helgvor. She was the eternal and ever changing morning. For her, he would slay Heigoun. The fear of losing her was so violent that he would feel his heart grow cold at the thought.

As he watched by the fire, Heigoun's silhouette rose in the flames; Helgvor believed ardently in his own victory, but in a livid glow he sometimes felt himself crushed by the club, disem-boweled by a hatchet. The cry that then died on his lips did not express fear, nor rage, but the supreme shame of not having known how to guard the Daughter of the Rocks.

They traveled in the canoe by day, stopped at night. Glava was delirious for a time, then youth won out. And they whiled the time exchanging the legends of their tribes. After twelve days she was well, out of danger. And that night, when Akr and Iouk were asleep, Helgvor spoke to Glava.

"In a few days the canoe will reach the Red Peninsula."

A shudder rippled on Glava's flesh, as the poplars quiver before the wind. She recalled the colossal warrior with the cruel eyes: Heigoun.

"Glava cannot live on the Red Peninsula," she cried.

At the sound of her voice Akr stirred restlessly in his sleep and the wolf growled. A sharp pang lashed Helgvor's heart.

"Where can Glava go? The Men of the Rocks would kill her, and women cannot live alone on the plain or in the forest."

"Amhao and Glava lived thus!"

"Was not Glava stretched helpless upon the ground? Even jackals could have devoured her. And was not Amhao's canoe pursued by the Tzohs on the river?"

"The chief will give me to the giant warrior," she said, trembling. "Glava prefers the tiger's fangs."

"Helgvor killed twenty times as many foes as Heigoun," the nomad said proudly. "If Heigoun wants Glava, Heigoun shall die."

She lifted her head with a surge of faith and admiration.

"Helgvor is braver than the snow-eagle!"

"Helgvor will not allow any man to touch Glava," he said excitedly. "For her he would fight the chief of chiefs and the whole tribe!"

Feeling that she would not be merely Helgvor's slave, Glava felt an intense tenderness.

THE moon was full when the canoe neared the Red Peninsula.

It was toward twilight that Iouk and Helgvor first saw the dark trees and the reeds faded by autumn. Since the preceding night they had been on the alert for Heigoun and his men. Helgvor decided not to take Glava to the tribe as yet, but concealed her in the bushes. He addressed Akr, more subtle than Iouk.

"Akr shall go and see if the Tzoh woman, sister of Glava, is on the Peninsula. He shall also find out if Heigoun is hunting. Akr shall not allow himself to be seen."

Akr left, light and swift as a stag. When he returned, the sun was rising over the forest.

"Akr walked among the Ougmars," he reported. "He was not seen! The Tzoh woman is on the Peninsula."

"Akr has seen Heigoun?"

"Heigoun is not there."

"Helgvor then shall go to see the chief," the nomad said, after a moment's thought. "Akr and Iouk will watch over Glava?"

"They'll watch!" Iouk assured him.

Glava listened, fearful. She did not wish Helgvor to leave her, but she knew his aim, and kept quiet.

"Let Glava fear nothing!" Helgvor said. "Before the sun reaches the black hills, Helgvor shall return."

Helgvor reached the Peninsula, and the warriors who saw him shouted loudly. Other men, women, ran forward, then came Akroun. He considered Helgvor with fretful elation.

"Helgvor came back! Where are his companions?"

"Iouk and Akr are waiting away from here."

"Why did they not come with Helgvor?"

"They shall come," he answered, lifting his voice to be heard above the cheers of the warriors.

"And the foreign girl?"

"Helgvor saved the Daughters of the Rocks," the tall nomad replied, his face set.

"He also saved our women," the chief said, gently. "The Men of the River have not forgotten. What does Helgvor wish?"

"That no one shall be master of the foreign women without his consent."

"So be it," the chief promised gravely.

"And if Heigoun protests?"

"The warriors will obey the chief of chiefs."

AKROUN'S sway was firm. No Ougmar now dared to question his judgment. But he distrusted the obscure twists of destiny, and he wished Heigoun to disappear.

"Helgvor always liked to obey Akroun, always shall obey him. But Heigoun will not obey. He will roam near the chief, roam near the Daughter of the Rocks. Let the chief allow Helgvor to fight."

Akroun was perturbed. Should Heigoun win, all would fear him.

"The tribe needs strong men!" he said at last. "If Heigoun gives up the foreign woman, Helgvor must not fight him."

"Heigoun will not yield her."

"Then," the chief said after a long pause, "the combat is inevitable."

"It will be so," Shtra put in. "Heigoun will attack Helgvor!"

The spectators were silent. Almost all dreaded the defeat of their hero. Because Heigoun was escorted by ten men, Akroun gave ten men to Shtra to avoid a surprise, but he concluded:

"Ougmars must not fight Ougmars. Only Helgvor and Heigoun may fight!"

"Thus shall it be," Shtra agreed. "And if Helgvor wins, Shtra shall give him Glava for a mate!"

"The foreign woman shall be Helgvor's mate!"

Then Helgvor asked for Amhao, and added: "If Helgvor is vanquished, the foreign women shall not be slaves. They shall be permitted to go free."

The chief and the warriors having given their consent, Helgvor sought Amhao. She had lived somberly, for no Ougmar woman had befriended her. At the sight of the young man she trembled and wept. At first, poignant joy dominated her, then she feared the death of Glava, and she wept.

"Glava lives," he said. "Come."

She understood, cried out loudly. Then, submissive, filled with unutterable affection for her savior, she picked up her child and followed Helgvor.

"The Son of Shtra returns," Akroun said. "He is not alone."

Glava heard the light rustling of the bushes and, suddenly seeing Amhao, boundless joy dilated her chest and she threw herself upon her sister.

"There!" Helgvor said. "Amhao and Glava shall follow Helgvor, and when Helgvor has found Heigoun they shall remain by the river bank, ready to flee in the canoe."

Glava then feared Helgvor's defeat, and no longer desired the combat. But she knew that the clash was unavoidable as the darkness which follows twilight.

CHAPTER XX.

FOR GLAVA!

THE endless world was the same, yet constantly died. The river rolled waters which were not the same waters, light succeeded light, and it was never the same light, night followed day, and it was ever another darkness, the beasts roamed the plains, and they were other beasts than the numberless beasts vanished into eternity.

Heigoun, Son of the Great Wolf, roamed, furious, beneath the sky. He had the brutal temper of the boar, the ferocity of the flesh-eaters and a merciless pride. His ambition had been born one day, when Akroun, thrown far by the horns of an aurochs, had nearly died. While the chief of chiefs, in his hut, healed slowly, Heigoun dominated the others. His deception was bitter when Akroun lived. The Son of the Wolf scorned Akroun, whose hair was dusted with the spray of old age.

After the kidnaping of the women, seeing his followers increase in numbers and influence, he had condemned Akroun in his own mind. But his men had been too few and too timid. Helgvor had defied him and dared to claim the stranger. Moreover, the exploits of Shtra's son had caused those of Heigoun to be forgotten.

Thinking of such things, rage shook the warrior; jealousy burned his entrails, he wished to annihilate Helgvor with invincible stubbornness. Finding neither Helgvor nor Glava on the Red

Peninsula, he had started out to seek them. His hope was to meet them either on the river bank or on the stream, for he thought they would follow that path.

And one morning he halted in a cove. Five men followed him, who would become minor chieftains the day he won over Akroun. All scanned the river, and saw nothing but floating trees, grasses, twigs, leaves, carried away by the current. Heigoun wondered whether Helgvor had not reached the Peninsula since his departure. And as he mused, a voice hailed him, and he turned, astounded at what he saw.

Helgvor had come.

He stood on a hillock, armed with a solid stake and one of the bronze hatchets taken from the defeated Tzohs, bow hung over one shoulder.

The giant replied to his call with a shout loud as the roar of a lion. His five followers advanced carefully, wishing to surround the young warrior, but Shtra appeared with the men given him by Akroun, and Hiolg, the boy, who had contrived to accompany them.

"Why does the son of jackals come here?" Heigoun asked.

"Helgvor wants to live in peace within his hut."

"Heigoun wants the foreign woman!"

"Did Heigoun find her? Did he make an alliance with her?"

"Before Heigoun, Helgvor is like the stag before the lion! Heigoun shall become chief of chiefs, and all the Ougmars will bow before him."

"Helgvor will never bow to Heigoun, nor obey Heigoun."

"Did Heigoun go and dare the Tzohs within their camp?" Shtra, irritated, spoke in turn. "Did he bring back twenty women? Did he kill fif-

teen warriors? Helgvor shall be a great chief."

H EIGOUN brandished his stake, but when he saw Helgvor grasp the bow, he hid in the bushes. His men imitated him and an arrow hummed close to Helgvor's head. Then Helgvor, Shtra and their men took shelter in the thicket. Silence weighed on land and waters; beasts no longer saw the erect beings. Then the voice of Helgvor rose.

"Does Heigoun want peace or war?"

"Heigoun wants Helgvor to submit or die!"

"It is well! Helgvor and Heigoun shall fight."

Then Helgvor took his bow in hand. He had six arrows, but Shtra and his warriors gave him twenty more. Before shooting, the young man warned:

"Helgvor is ready to fight!"

There was no reply, and the first arrow whistled. It shot through the leaves, near Heigoun, who laughed scornfully. At the fourth arrow, a roar of fury burst out, and the colossus appeared. Blood dripped from his ear, and his face was twisting; he rushed like a wounded leopard.

The twigs of the bush made the use of the bow awkward, and Helgvor was eager to fight. He showed himself, shot an arrow at random, for he was hurried, then his fire-hardened stake met the stake of the giant. The sense of fatality, submission to Destiny, held the other warriors aside.

The stakes clashed as Heigoun sprang upon Helgvor at top speed, but the young man avoided the lunge, leaping aside. He thrust out in his turn, and his point struck the giant's club, hung from the shoulder.

"Heigoun is heavy as an aurochs!

Shall Helgvor have to kill him with arrows?"

It seemed that the Son of Shtra was about to use the bow again, but the desire to clash hand to hand with his rival proved strong enough to make him retrace his steps.

Heigoun lunged for the belly; the weapon slid on the ribs, ripped off a strip of skin. Already Helgvor, pushing with all his might, had driven his stake into his foe's breast. Heigoun reeled and grasped his club. Because his stake was blunted, Helgvor changed it for the bronze hatchet.

Formidable despite his wound, Heigoun whirled his club, but, carried away by his spring, he missed Helgvor. As he rushed by, the bronze hatchet split his skull. He fell, the hatchet dropped hard twice more, and death came. For a moment longer the immense body palpitated, then Heigoun was still forever.

"Helgvor is the mightiest of the Men of the River!" Shtra proclaimed in a resounding voice.

And the shrill voice of the boy, Hiolg, repeated:

"Helgvor is mightiest of men!"

GLAVA and Amhao had waited, ready for flight, in the canoe hidden among the reeds. At intervals the girl was swept by cold shivers, she chattered as if winter

had come suddenly into the sky. Her confidence died and was reborn. She saw Helgvor beaten constantly, saw him triumph constantly. Neither image effaced the other completely. She listened tensely, but the distance was too great, and she heard nothing save the monotonous voice of the flowing waters, the rustling of insects, and when she looked at Amhao, identical terror showed in their eyes.

Steps were heard. Unbearable impatience drove Glava from the canoe upon the plain. The universe spun, Glava uttered a wild cry and sank to her knees. Helgvor, her beloved, had come back.

She extended her arms, while her face dripped with tears.

"The hatchet dropped the Son of the Wolf," Shtra said.

Helgvor held the girl against his chest, and with her, he seemed to embrace the river, the forests and the plains, all space and all time. She was weak from a happiness composed of the tests she had survived, of the death from which Helgvor had saved her, weak also from the immense faith she had in his strength.

Then Shtra said, according to traditions:

"The Daughter of the Rocks shall live in Helgvor's hut. She shall be obedient, and he shall kill those who covet her."

THE END.